

# *In Sydney*

*Continuation of "Our Odyssey Towards Freedom"  
by Georgina Teyrovsky*

*San Francisco, California.*

*2014*

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## Introduction

When I was writing "*Our Odyssey Towards Freedom*" after two and a half years of spare time writing, I became sort of impatient and rushed though the conclusion.

Only years later I remembered what interesting people our Customers in our first shop in Foveaux Street were and how we knew their problems and shared their experiences. From their stories was born the addendum "*In Sydney*", as well as as the conclusion of our days in Sydney.

You will be able to travel with us to California, in my next book, "*Our Life in California then seeing The Whole Wide World*".

Georgina Teyrovsky  
September 2007.

## **In Sydney**

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## **In Sydney**

It was another step into the unknown, when we packed all our belongings into our little Austin car and headed from Melbourne to Sydney. The main inspiration for such a decision was our conviction that our application for immigrating to the USA would be executed faster in Sydney than in Melbourne.

We had already secured quarters with our countrymen, right next to Sydney's well-known bridge. They wanted to share their apartment with Czech countrymen, so they could cope easier with their rent.

But there was a surprise for us upon our arrival. Our specialties in Melbourne were for me the apparel trade, and textile dyeing for Edmund in which we both were well established and relatively well paid were not to be found. At least we did not find any in the telephone directory.

In those years the Australian government established minimum hourly wages: They were observed and paid in all sectors and industries and were never much higher. That's why all working citizens concentrated their efforts to own good living quarters. Such was the case for us. For in that year (1951) we were already married for four years and we felt that it was time to have our own living quarters. Therefore we decided to use our wits and gain our own apartment. We looked for a grocery store which had living quarters. Due to rent control in Australian cities, Sydney included, no one moved out from apartments and no one built new apartment buildings. To make an old tenant move out, the interested party had to pay several thousand pounds, the amount of the price of a car, which was illegal. It would cost us all our savings of nearly four years of both our labors. Should our Visa to U.S. arrive and we would be in a hurry to sell, if denounced to the authorities, we would lose it all! We did not want to risk it. Buying a shop with house privileges would enable us to buy and sell the shop with quarters which was within the law. We really intended that the shop would be mainly my working place and Edmund would search for a dyer or dry cleaner job.

Our little car was bought for 800 pounds and was immediately sellable for the same amount. You could ask how come? Because the waiting time for an ordered car was two years and the whole amount was payable at the date of delivery. When some interested party gained money and did not want or could not wait two whole years, they paid or offered even more than whole amount of a new car, to have a car right away!

It was clear, that our 800 pounds would not be enough for purchasing a bigger store, but only the smallest one, and even then, a loan would be

needed. But banks and private loan companies refused us. They all said that we did not have enough security for them. We visited the Union Private Financial Co. in the Sydney Center. Their officer, Mr. Proctor, told us openly that they would not loan us any amount, that we had not enough security for them.

Searching the Sydney newspapers we found an advertisement for a small grocery-sweet shop which stated that "the loan is guaranteed" and also that the shop was with living quarters. This time the Real Estate salesman took us to the same Sydney center, to the same street, to the same building, to the same floor and to our surprise even to the same Mr. Proctor, who refused us the day before. We shook hands with him like we had never met before and proceeded to fill out the papers, without telling our Real Estate salesman we ever met before!

The shop was very small, on a steep street called Foveaux and it was in the very center of Sydney in Surry Hills. It was on the corner of Korben street, and well established. It was open daily from 7 AM to 10 PM. On Sundays it was closed from 11AM to 4:30PM (for the church visit). During the day hours it served as a grocery shop and at evenings it was a "sweet shop" selling ice cream, milk shakes, lemonade, pastries and sweets. Something like a Seven-Eleven in the US, only smaller.

The apartment was divided into three floors- with the balcony on top of the building. The building was old and badly maintained, but the rent was unbelievably low. For the shop and the whole living quarters it was one pound and 15 shillings monthly. On top of it, the proceeds from the shop were about double the wages for both of us. So we did not even hesitate and said "Yes!"

### **Mr. Cross training us in Grocery Trade**

The owner of the grocery shop was introduced to us as Jack Cross. His wife's name was Evelyn and she looked some eight years older, about 45 years old. She had a very sharp tongue, not so much for us as for Jack.

Jack Cross was a friendly and kind man, and if I am not mistaken he liked us. When he found out that we were absolute beginners in grocery trade and welcomed all his suggestions, he taught us like a father.

He taught us how to weigh sugar and rice, and how to put ice cream in a cone and everything else we needed to know. Nowadays all such items are prepackaged, but then they were not. He also taught us how to treat the customers from Sydney's Surry Hills (from the year 1951). Our behavior

gave us away that we were from educated middle or better class from Central Europe. We believed that with kindness, a smile and civility we could gain the world. That was not fitting for our customers in Surry Hills, the low-income area. "Such a way would not get you anywhere!" claimed Jack resolutely. And then he acted out the proper way of the shopkeeper to the entering customer.

He stepped proudly next to his merchandise and with the expression on his face "only try and you will see!" If any greeting, first let the customer greet you! When the customer, mostly women, did not say anything after several seconds he said in a threatening voice: "Yes?" or "What do you want?" When she then asked about what chocolate she could have, Mr. Kross stepped next to that section and showed with his hand the display of chocolates. The expression on his face was of impatience with a mixture of boredom.

The customer asked the price, selected one and disappeared. When the required merchandise was not in the shop, he did not apologize, but dryly said "not available!" The customer meekly asked what similar product was available, bigger or smaller: she quickly selected one, paid up and left.

"Can we show more kindness, friendliness and willingness to help?" we asked. "The friendship and kindness you can show to those whom you know and they would appreciate it", retorted Mr. Cross. He was absolutely right!

Mr. Cross wrote down the amount up to which he could give credit for each customer. It was a time-tested method of practical dealing with those people. "Up to these amounts you could really trust your customers, but not more! You have to consider that these customers don't have any more money for their weekly food than they earn. They do not earn much. They are like children, they would like to buy more. You have to think for them, you have to have a strong will and say a decisive: "No", when they reach their limit," advised Mr. Cross, like a father. "But Jack, what we would say to them?" we asked. "You don't say anything, simply only shake your head in a resolute "No."

That was golden advice, every word of his was clear as a diamond. All such customers paid their owed amount every Friday and started to purchase on new credit. "To all customers, only not to Eva Spitwall!" added Jack. We noticed on the wall near the ceiling was written with big letters "Do not trust Eva Spitwall!" "But what about if she would see it?" We objected. "Let her see it!" commented Jack.

"She had open credit and used it in this shop for years. Once she overstepped it over the given limit a tiny bit. Then on the next Friday she

did not come to pay her debt, which here is the custom. For a month I saw her walking on the other side of our street. She went to shop at our competition- for cash. We share with other shopkeepers in this area the names of unreliable customers. That's why another shopkeeper did not give her a credit line. That really ate me up, that she was spending her money, all for cash, but with the competition, because she had to eat. Isn't it true?!"

When I saw her later on our sidewalk, I blocked her way. I said to her "I know that you do not want to pay your old debt. How about if I would forgive you and from now you will again shop in my shop, but only for cash? I will never mention the old debt and you will not ever ask for new credit!" Then we shook hands on the new deal. Since then she shops here, even if not always.

We asked if it was worth it to open so many credit lines for so many customers. There were about 30 families, perhaps even more. "Is it worth it? They give you practically their whole payroll every Friday and then they come to buy everything only from you. They don't care about the prices, because nowhere else would they get anything without cash. It is a very poor district, people live here just "getting by". They know that they do not have the luxuries of other social classes, so they blow all their money on food, drinks, and sweets."

In that one week, when we were Mr. Cross apprentices, we learned inconspicuously that they were never married. Evelyn was married to an older, well-to-do man when she met Jack. She was dissatisfied in her childless marriage. They agreed that Evelyn would put up money for a grocery store and that would enable them to establish a home together. They agreed that when they sold the shop, Evelyn would get her money back and the resulting profit they would divide between themselves.

To that I have to add that to obtain a divorce in those decades in Australia was close to impossible. Also, to obtain a new apartment was virtually nil. Thanks to rent control, which had already lasted 30 years the rents were ridiculously low. Nobody moved out of such low rent apartments and nobody built new apartments. Old owners of buildings often abandoned their properties- donated them to the city, as the city fees, taxes and expense for water and waste collecting exceeded rental income. For repairs nothing was left.

Australians circumvented the divorce difficulties the way Jack and Evelyn did. Evelyn went to the city and requested a name change to Cross, the last name of the man with whom she wanted to live. Such a change was relative easy and fast achieved. Therefore this couple became legally Mr. and Mrs. Cross.



Then they moved into a new area, where no one knew them. That was not difficult in Sydney, where two and half-million citizens lived. Actually it was Jack who told us of this. I doubt that he told anybody else.

### **Our Takeover of the Shop on Foveaux Street**

Mrs. Evelyn was of Irish origin and of Irish manners. She knew how she could bite into painful nerves with her witty remarks. This gift she used mainly on Jack. They were such little needles, but sometimes even daggers which she threw at Jack lavishly. In Anglo-Saxon words it's called "mental cruelty!" It sounds to an uninformed listener as an innocent remark, but its victim is painfully wounded. I remember particularly one moment when Evelyn Cross leaned ostentatiously in a doorway between the shop and the kitchen. Her eyes traveled over the fully stocked shop shelves and proclaimed: "How interesting that all my money is stacked onto those shelves!" She wanted to emphasize that it was her money which enabled them to buy into the shop. We looked at Jack who did not respond verbally, but from his pale face and expression we knew she hit the target. All work in the shop, with endless hours, obviously she threw on Jack.

It was then customary at a change of hands that knowledgeable previous owners of the shop trained the buyers, the future owners, for a week. In order to save time the former owners hosted the interested party and after the takeover the new owners hosted the former owners for one week.

From that week of Jack's tutoring we remember the following episode. When Mrs. Evelyn offered to prepare lunch for us I said that Edmund is very picky about his food. The hostess therefore offered to prepare steak with macaroni and tomatoes. It sounded terrific, so we enthusiastically accepted the invitation. We were so involved in the work in the shop that we did not pay attention to Evelyn's preparation of lunch.

When she invited us for lunch into the kitchen we were flabbergasted about her creation. In front of each of us stood a big soup dish filled with pink, cloudy liquid. In this mushy substance were swimming little black pieces, probably meat. I valiantly spooned one dark piece of meat into my mouth. The soup did not have any taste whatsoever, absolutely none. That little black piece was tough as a piece of wood. I tried and tried to chew it up, but the piece persistently resisted all my efforts. Our whole future depended on getting along with Mr. and Mrs. Cross, therefore my effort was nearly superhuman. The more I chewed it, the harder it seemed to become.

It reminded me of a tough chewing gum. Also, absolutely without any taste. In that moment Edmund also tried his soup. He soon said with resignation: "This is not edible! What is it?" We were aware that we were risking the loss of the purchase of the shop with the living quarters so important for our future. In the following threatening silence Jack joined us. He simply announced: "This is not edible!"

Mrs. Evelyn became like a different person, meek and humble. She did not protest.

All four of us were hungry, so we agreed that one of us would go for "Fish and Chips" which was seafish with French fries and ketchup. This meal was very reasonably priced and ready in several minutes in Fish and Chips shops in all Australian cities, for Australia is surrounded by the sea. I was elected to fetch the lunch. When the four of us were enjoying the sea fish, by the way, wrapped in old newspaper pages, I dared to ask Evelyn how she created her extraordinary meal. She confessed that she wanted to create something "extra delicious", but it was not ever tested by her. She cut frozen beef steak with great effort into small squares and threw them into boiling water in her pressure cooker. Into this boiling water she added half a pound of macaroni and three fresh tomatoes and cooked it. The result was the pink soup. The macaroni changed into the mushy substance, tomatoes left only the pink color in the soup. What was too much for macaroni and tomatoes was too little for the frozen beef, which stayed hard like a shoe sole. This "extraordinary delicious" lunch was at least for us unforgettable.

As the day of our takeover of the shop was coming closer, we realized that we had to come up with more money for the merchandise which would stay in the shop. But we did not have any more money! For the first time in our life and we hoped also for the last time, we decided to put some items of our own into a pawn shop. Our selection fell on the diamond ring, the inheritance from Edmund's father, which he carried over the Czech boundary and we treasured. We did not want to sell it. It was a piece of our home, a part of our tradition. In a pawn shop they offered us 120 pounds to loan for one month on 33% interest. It was "bloody" interest! But we accepted.

That very first Sunday in September 1951 at exactly 11AM two grocery experts and estimators of the grocery merchandise arrived. It was their profession to estimate the value of each grocery item at the change of ownership.

They literally pushed out onto the street the former and future owners alike. It had to be left completely up to their estimation of all merchandise as impartial estimators.

At 4:30pm when the shop was opened again for customers, the shop was under our ownership.

The money borrowed from the pawnshop was not sufficient, but Jack Cross promised to wait for the last amount of the loan. We actually planned that I alone would run the shop and Edmund would seek employment as a textile dyer somewhere in Sydney. We ventured in grocery trade mainly to gain the living quarters for us without a risk of expensive rent. As it turned out, the Foveaux Street shop had enough work and earnings for both of us. It was an exciting adventure for us to be owners of a grocery shop. It was such a new experience and challenge- in Sydney, New South Wales.

In the first place the whole atmosphere there was as cut from a previous century. The little old houses were squashed together on the steep hill, one to another with little front entrances onto the main street, 4 up to 10 meters, while inside were three rooms, long living quarters. Since the little houses were built close one to another there was not sufficient light in their rooms. Only front and back rooms had some windows. It was English style of poor class quarters in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in an all Anglo-Saxon world.

Even our grocery shop on the corner of 86 Foveaux Street was smaller than one sees nowadays. But our little shop, the corner house (on Korben St.) had more windows and more light. In comparison to the little houses around us our three floors seemed a palace.

To Edmund and to me the whole scene reminded us of Nerodovku on Mala Strana in old Prague. And the poor customers were such characters as in the historical novel "U snedeneho kràmu" (At The Eaten Up Shop) from Ignac Herman.

As soon as the Foveaux shop passed into our hands, we immediately started working hard at improving the shop and to be honest, our work on the improvements lasted nearly three years!

Due to the fact that Evelyn Cross was never diligent nor capable or an enthusiastic housekeeper, all corners of the building needed improvement. Jack had only time to attend the grocery shop, supplies and customers. For repairs he did not have even a spare minute of his time. The owner of the building who was over 80 years old, did not have the energy nor money to improve or repair anything. We had full understanding of his situation due to such low rent he received from the house and shop. We promised to ourselves that we would work on the improvement and upgrading of this building. It would not only improve our comfort and advancement but would also upgrade the value of the building itself. Some steps to the cellar were completely missing. Some outside walls were infected all through with

fungus with a despicable smell. The whole building needed to be painted inside and outside urgently and indisputably!

From the first money we had left, after we got our family diamond ring out of the pawn shop and after we paid off the debt to Jack Cross for the grocery supplies, we bought good paint. In the hours, when our shop did not need both of us, Edmund chemically cleaned the walls, made repairs, and painted the walls with light colors.

The shop was open 100 hours weekly, 15 hours daily from 7AM to 10PM, which did not give us any time to go out for amusement or visit friends that was a fact. But into our shop came so many interesting people, some being immigrants, we had many interesting conversations, all we wanted during our working time. On top of that we could invite into our kitchen, which also served as our living room, customers who were pleasant and had time to visit with us. Edmund and I then took turns to attend customers, or to spend time with a guest.

The whole time we worked and lived in the Foveaux Street shop was an era in our life which we remember with delight and tenderness. Some of our customers became our friends. The interesting episodes, which happened in the shop and in this Surry Hills location, filled our days and our hearts. Our little shop was the center of this little world and we were the center of the stage.

In this "stage of events" our shop was the only place with a telephone. All important local discussions, news, dates, even infidelities took place in our shop. When our customers discovered that no sensational news, information nor secrets which we overheard, were ever disclosed to anybody, they started to feel at home in our shop. Every morning between our Coco-Cola icebox and our counter, local matrons took apart local sensational news and their own personal experiences. We could also call it local gossip. Between Edmund and I we had great fun from it all. But did not pass along even one word. And our customers loved us for it! We took our roles as shopkeepers with seriousness, delight and with great energy.

The very first night in Foveaux Street I did not sleep at all! Perhaps it was due to the excitement from a new situation, or perhaps for having our own quarters after three years of uncertainties or from the noises of trucks and cars going up the steep hill, which was noisy indeed.

The second night I slept like a log. For the next weeks and month the noisy trucks changing gears into the steep hill never woke me up.

Among the improvements we tried on the house was to change the huge black fireplace in the adjacent room. We did not like to use the fireplace, due to our experiences with them in the Kew hospital in

Melbourne. So Edmund tried to build a bookshelf in it, but it came out, as Edmund tried his carpeting skill for the first time in his life, all crooked. It ended covered with a floral curtain. Inside walls were painted progressively with cream colors and our living quarters looked new and cheerful.

To paint the whole large corner building we won a jackpot! We found out if we would let some firm put an advertisement of their product on the building, they would paint the whole section with solid good paints (water resistant) like for example "Kinkara Tea", which we were selling anyhow. We contracted all top sections of the corner building to the firms, of whose products we were selling. Since we were located on a steep hill, some sections on the walls were very high from the street level, like four floor levels. They were very difficult to reach. Those painters did not come for many weeks 'till one day all eleven painting firms came on the same day with eleven painter masters and eleven helpers. They crawled one over another, built scaffoldings over each others heads and had great fun from all that crowded confusion. They were years and years in the same trade. Some were prior helpers of the other painter foremen's and worked on various places in Sydney, till that important day when all met around our house. No one wanted to withdraw or leave from such a congenial conglomeration and co-operation while they worked and dripped paint on each other's heads. From time to time we ran out from our shop and fed them with cookies, Coca-Cola and other goodies.

We also made them a snap shot of all of them together.

Before the dusk fell above Sydney's streets our building above the shop sparkled with light colors and artistic renditions of our products of chocolates, cones of tempting ice cream and other attractive merchandise. Our customers were startled. Who saw their old small houses clustered together remembered that it was all immersed in shadowy darkened colors. That was also the case in Surry Hills. Such houses were not painted for decades, only became darker and dustier with each decade of time. One time I could not help it, and asked a local resident woman at Foveaux Street, "Were all these houses here always so dark from the beginning, or did they age and darken with time? You remember them for some fifty years, for sure, isn't it so?" "Do you know, that I do not remember them ever looking different than that!" "Do you think they were painted from very beginning dark or they grew dark or black with time?" I continued to ask. "I think," commented an old neighbor woman, "That someone painted them dark gray or black right away, so they could not get dirty from soot." "I am of the same opinion!" I added with a sarcasm, which the neighbor even did not

notice. Perhaps she even liked such dark streets. To me it looked awful and depressing.

And now could you imagine that our corner building with an entrance into the shop below, the next sunny morning among the shadowy buildings was sparkling ostentatiously with a multitude of colors on an off white background on all its corners. On it was provocatively painted the huge cone with pinkish and yellow ice cream (from the third and second floors) then a white & red packet of Kinkara Tea and tempting packets of chocolates! In whatever part of Foveaux street the citizen was walking on that steep street, going up hill from the central station of Sydney center heading to Crown Avenue, all eyes had to be mesmerized on that ice cream advertisement. Like, if a fly gets caught on a gluey flytrap and could not help it. They could not even like the sign, even resent it, even if it made them upset with its provocative colors, or on the contrary they would like it very much, but in any case, they could not let their eyes let go of this sign!

Edmund added: "This is just right, such signs above a small shop hits one in the eyes so much, that any pedestrian going past the shop could not overlook it!"

And really such was the situation. As unknown pedestrians were struggling uphill on Foveaux Street mostly on hot summer and sunny spring days, of which Sydney had many, these pedestrians became very thirsty. So they stopped in our shop for an orange drink or Coca-Cola. Mothers were buying their children an ice-cream cone and were saying: "I have no idea what suddenly grabbed my son! He started yelling like crazy, that he wanted ice cream right now, and did not move till I bought him a double scooped one!" The boy was already licking with gusto the melting ice-cream on the sides of the cone. Edmund and I knew very well why. Guilty were those juicy colorful pictures of ice-cream cones above the shop, which tempted souls to sweet sin, for one could not turn his eyes from it, till the mouth got satisfied!

At the beginning every wall in the Foveaux shop was crying for improvement, so that we did not know where to start first. We were kept busy from early dawn to deep night. As I mentioned, the shop was open from 7AM till 10 PM, even longer, for six days of the week. Only Sundays the shop was closed, probably for the visit to church, from 11 AM till 4:30PM. After 10PM was the time to count the cash and finish other work. Counting cash was not simple, because the Australian pound was then 20 shillings and one shilling was divided into 12 huge brass pennies. We decided with all the work facing us, that the priority would go to attending

our customers and the improvements on the house would be done only when time permitted.

It was an unwritten rule of Jack Cross that the prices of the merchandise were not written down, but the shopkeeper had to carry them in his head. The first thing I did was to create a diagram of all shop merchandise with prices on it and that was our salvation. Jack promised to assist us the very first week of our shopkeeper role, but he came only twice for part of a day. It was difficult to ask him for more, so we had to learn fast.

The difficult part of the new role for Edmund was the physical work. The ice cream often stayed on his scoop and flew in some other direction, and landed on one of the shelves, while the cone was crushed into tiny pieces. The rice, salt, sugar, barley, semolina and such loose merchandise was weighed, then packed into little bags in the shop, twisted around fast, and closed expertly with tiny horns sticking on sides. When it was not done fast enough and nimbly enough the sugar or rice spilled all over the counters. Edmund succeeded in this quite often at the beginning.

The result was that at the beginning the shop was called: "Georgina's shop".

I knew very well that Edmund would in time learn all tricks of the new trade very well, and I was not mistaken. Edmund in time not only learned all the prices, the tricks of weighing and packing, but remembered all the supplying firms and their wholesale prices. He also remembered which ones to call for better prices and the rest for better delivery conditions. We also learned how to deal with customers of very limited earning ability in low-income areas.

Such a lesson came, when at the bottom of a can of sweet fancy cookies Edmund found only several broken pieces. Without thinking Edmund passed them as a gift to the nearest boy standing in the shop. "You should not do that!" objected Jack Cross, who came that day to advise us. "Why not?" wondered inexperienced Edmund. "You will see for yourself!" said Cross. And we did. In a few minutes the shop was literally besieged by a yelling crowd of children of all ages. "We also want sweet cookies - for free!" They yelled over one another in voices of justified demanders. The crowd of boys grew rapidly inside and outside on the sidewalk so big, that no grown-up customer could enter.

Jack Cross solved the situation by stepping outside the shop and in a strong resolute voice announced to the crowd of boys, "Without money there will be no more cookies for anybody!" The boys were reluctantly leaving and for sometime were yelling words of disappointment.

“But what do you do with such broken cookies?” we asked with resignation. “They cannot be sold!” “Offer them for half-price and add as many as you want for free if they bring the least money.” That worked to the satisfaction of all. One mother from our neighborhood, Mrs. Turvey, gave each of her four little children two pennies for breakfast so they rushed to us to buy broken sweet cookies. “Why?” we asked her neighbors “So they do not quarrel among themselves. You have scales, and that is a symbol of just distribution. For her it makes breakfast simple!”

### **In a Surry Hills Shop**

The little houses in our neighborhood were built tightly together with small frontage, as I mentioned. It meant that all customers lived very close to our shop. The mothers used the situation and were sending their little offspring's to shop with us daily. Since children did not remember more than one or two items, and because they could lose bigger money, we had constant activity with little customers. Sometimes a little urchin came even four times for more eggs saying: “Mother needs another egg for her dough!”

Edmund had shown his knowledge in the business world by his control of our deliveries. He said that we could not check all deliveries at once. So we would check, he wisely proposed, one delivery man a day. And low and behold we found out that all the delivery men were systematically cheating the former owners. Bread and bakery products had government dictated prices and profits, therefore the profit on one bread loaf was only half a penny, a very negligible amount. But to sell bread and rolls was necessary for the sake of customers.

Everyday the driver from a bakery stopped at our shop with new bakery goods and picked up the leftovers, which were deducted from the bill. That was the theory. After we checked the bill we discovered that the driver added the left-over bread to the bill. It meant that not only the gain on bread was very small but that the sale was a losing proposition!

We called a shopkeeper several streets away from us who had become our friend and he, after he found the same situation, said “Can you imagine that this rascal from the bakery kept robbing me for three years day after day, and the whole time I was here! I found delivery papers as proof for a half a year. He confessed for all three years!” When added up- it showed that he doesn't have any money to return, he spent it all! If I would not report it to the authorities, he pledged that he would deliver fresh bread daily



‘till he repaid it all, the rascal! I know where he would get it. He will rob the other shopkeepers!”

Other drivers with deliveries, one after the other, “forgot” to leave paid for merchandise, as it showed. Some even brought such boxes with goods in and after we paid for them, as the payments were requested in cash, they took the boxes with them into the truck. As if they would exchange it. Only when the shop was full of customers and we were very busy, they forgot to bring the exchange. It was not the firms, but the delivery drivers, which raised their incomes in such a way!

I remember the driver of smoked meat—the Hungarian Jew. He welcomed us into our roles as shopkeepers as a family brother, “Because we are from the same middle European culture,” he proclaimed enthusiastically. When after his departure we weighed his delivery of smoked meat, we discovered that 30% of his merchandise was missing. It was exactly the percentage of our promised profit. We called his company, found where he was delivering next and called him back. The delivered meat and his bill was still untouched, where he left it. After we weighed the merchandise together and it was clear that he cheated us, he announced enthusiastically: “I like it so much that you are so smart! You caught me, because you are such intelligent people!”

After he brought all shortchanged meats to us he added “You have to watch your deliveries! You cannot blame the guy for trying!” He did not show even a tiny bit of embarrassment.

In time all our delivery men came to the conclusion that we two they could not cheat and they stopped trying. We conducted our checks only occasionally.

When we talk about the orders, I remember on my very first ordering of sweet and fancy cookies the shop had about 20 varieties, of fancy cookies that were very well liked by our Foveaux customers. Before the sale of the shop Jack Cross did not order any, to make our debt for the inventory to him smaller. That’s why the first Monday after our take-over I called the Nabisco factory to place a large order for sweet cookies. The girl on the phone simply stated that to our city area the delivery could only be in three weeks. I explained to her that we are the new owners of the shop and are practically without their cookies due to the inventory reduction. I nearly begged her for the delivery, for without their cookies we could not successfully open our business. But the girl dryly claimed that delivery could only be in three weeks! I remembered then the advice of Mrs. Carlton, to be tough with Australians- and so I said in strict voice: “Let me speak to your manager then!” There was silence for several seconds and

then the girl said: "If it is so, we will send you your order first thing tomorrow morning!" And that really happened!

Problems in Sydney and also in all of Australia from 1930 'till 1960 were the laws on drinking alcohol, mostly beer. Places selling beer, called pubs (public houses located in hotels), were forced to close down at 6 p.m. It was meant to prevent the public from spending evenings drinking alcohol. In reality it resulted differently. Australian men not only craved beer more, but as the factory workers left at 5 pm they rushed from work, without dinner, directly to the pubs and for half an hour, on an empty stomach, drank as many beers as they could. Often men competed as to who could drink the most in such a short time 'till 6 o'clock. In those pubs there were no chairs, men had to stand and push their way through dozens of drunkards to get to the counter. Chairs and tables were only in the sections for women. A man could enter only in the company of a woman. To us Europeans it sounded crazy.

One preacher from England visiting Sydney wrote in the newspaper that he saw more drunkards in Sydney streets on one Friday afternoon (when people collect their payrolls) than he saw in England in his whole lifetime!

The police cars hurried at 6pm to the pubs and collected the drunken men, who had fallen on the streets, for their own protection. Police took them to their stations and let them sleep there until the next morning. Then they released them sober or near sober because some would otherwise be run over by cars.

We had the bad luck that on the next corner of our block of our shop, was the hotel, which had a pub. In those years the hotel license was granted only when someone opened a beer tavern, the public place = the pub and vice versa. Beer breweries were very rich and politically powerful.

So it happened that one Friday after 6 p.m. Such an unlucky individual happened to come into our shop. This skinny and small drinker shyly asked for a glass of milk. Probably he needed something nourishing. One glass of milk cost 10 cents, a small price. When he took the glass into his hand his hand shook and he started to drip the milk all over our counters and glass fixtures and the floor. It was clear case of "delirium tremors".

We worked so many hours in our shop that we took turns in tending shop single handed some mornings and some afternoons. One afternoon I was alone in the shop. The spilling of milk on the counter by this chronic drinker made me angry, so I ordered him to put the glass down. When he continued to spill the milk, I took it out of his hand myself and put it down. I asked him with a grave and dignified voice, the best one I could master, to leave our shop. But this intoxicated customer still stood there like he was

frozen to the floor. I repeated my request several times, but in vain. He did not move. I did not want our sober customers to find our shop in such disorderly shape. But there was no one around to help me. So I took him literally by his collar, lifted him higher into air (my justifiable anger probably gave me energy) and I literally carried him outside on the street. I stood him against the wall. At that moment Edmund was just returning from his afternoon pause. When he saw my activity his face opened to a big smile. He said proudly: "I married such a fragile girl and yet when needed, she can even carry an undesirable man out of the shop! What a woman!"

### **Our Customers**

One of our favorite customers was Mrs. Joyce Sutton. She was small and plump between 26-30 years old, but looked older. We suspected that she deliberately or subconsciously did not want to look more attractive for her older husband. She had three little daughters and was living only two houses from us- on Foveaux street in a substandard little house. She never invited us inside her home. Our little shop was for her and her neighbor friends their "parlor," where their intimate discussions took place. While standing and sipping their Coca-Colas they shared their deepest family secrets. They had great humor in sharing the events of their neighbors. Trapped in humble households in financially squeezed circumstances with boring husbands without any ambition, their moments of laughter about the daily human tragicomedy in the slum area where they lived were the only recreation and amusement those young housewives had.

Joyce Sutton was of small stature and rounded shape, but of high intelligence and gifted with a great sense of humor. Her husband loved to drink, therefore there went all extra money if there was any extra money ever left. In Australia in the fifties it was not yet the custom for married women to work outside her home. Namely if there were small children at home and the women were not trained in any line of work the outlook for any financial improvement in the future was therefore none. We admired these women that in such humble circumstances they could look on their lives with humor. Edmund always had a great sense of humor and from time to time he sprinkled their discussions with acceptable jokes or funny stories. That always hit the right note with them.

Out of such talks we learned that every one of their husbands from time to time came home late at night in a drunken condition and in a black mood. They then tried to pour their negativity onto their families. Those

crowded, ill-furnished households full of children definitely did not help to lift their mood. Their wives, with gusto, used the only weapon they had: They called police. The police drove the drunken husbands to the police station, where they could "sleep it off" 'till the next morning. Then the wife had two choices: Either submit the request for a divorce or to drop it and take the sober husband home. The sober husband had two possibilities, either stay in the police station or to humbly return home. He really did not have another choice. Such an episode was an advantage for the wife, as it depended on her decision if the husband would be released.

Our group of women was sharing such episodes with cynical gusto. Perhaps it helped them to accept such situations. To Edmund and me it was difficult to imagine how a good relationship could function between husband and wife after such events.

The extra money of our Australian customers was spent mostly for Coca-Colas, ice creams, chocolates and cigarettes. When they were buying such sweets they often liked to add that they did not have any "luxuries" meaning then bathroom, refrigerator, telephone, living room, washing machines, dryers and such. Therefore they could compensate themselves by many goodies. We saw it from a different vantagepoint: that they did not have any of those household items, which make living more comfortable, because all extra money was spent on silly nonessentials: sweets and cigarettes. The wages for non-professional work were set by the Australian government; 8-10 pounds for women, and 11-15 pounds for men weekly (about 5 dollars for women and 7 dollars for men weakly), which really was not much for a decent living standard.

In the contract, all immigrant families like us, both husbands and wives, worked intensively and saved money passionately. In two or three years since their arrival to Australia they were buying furniture, cars, even houses (on deposit), or entered into business. Some even started their business in their own trade.

Such progress of immigrants was to old Australians hard to understand. They never calculated that 2 or 3 Australian pounds weekly (spent otherwise on candy, soft drink, and cigarettes), could accumulate into 150 pounds yearly, and in three years 450 pounds which was enough to put down a deposit on an older house, also even to buy a radio, washing machine and such. When both members in a family worked outside, then the whole second wage could be saved and the family would advance rapidly. To work diligently towards the goal of prosperity gave to immigrants the hope for a better tomorrow. Also it gave them the pleasure

and adventure of husbands and wives forming a partnership both working in the same direction.

In Australian families husbands and wives drifted and pulled in opposite directions. Men worked reluctantly, even with dislike and were saying "Why should I work harder when I know that "my old woman" spends all the money anyhow." Very often they refused the promotion at work saying that they did not want extra responsibility.

The wives then constantly complained and lamented that their husbands didn't earn enough and that is why their families are poor and have nothing. In family quarrels this argument was often repeated. Men tried to wash their bitterness down with beer. The discussions the men had turned around the female "blood suckers". Women blamed their poverty on men and men on women and this went around and around.

### **Joyce Sutton**

From the conversations of our daily customers we learned that Joyce Sutton grew up with an impossible mother, who did not have any understanding of her. Joyce ran away from home at sixteen. It did not take long for her to end up in a precocious situation. In the desire to establish her own home she married an older man and in record time she brought into the world three lovely little girls. About her own fertility she once said that on glance on masculine pants and next week she is pregnant!

We also had the opportunity to see the "impossible mother of Joyce Sutton". We knew then that something was in the making. The younger brother of Joyce, Ben, just reached the age of 18 years. Ben planned to escape from his motherly loving arms. He was recruited into the Australian Navy. This he kept in secret from his mother 'till the very last moment for fear of her screams and hysterical scenes for which she was well known. The last moment was staged in our shop that particular Saturday at 4pm. That was the time he had to leave for the military camp in another city for Navy newcomers. He knew his mother would be visiting his sister Joyce that afternoon. In that moment they both were present in our shop. Ben entered and at our counter kissed his mother and said: "Mother, I am already 18 years old, so I can decide about myself by myself. I was recruited into the Australian Navy. I have to leave for my Navy training now! Thanks and good-by, mother!" And Ben shot out of our shop like a bullet and before we could grasp the situation, Ben's mother called something out and in seconds her huge body laid on the floor next to our counter! And she was a woman

of huge dimensions! As our shop was indeed very small, her huge body covered most space meant for our customers!

Our business was at a stand-still as our potential customers could not get to the counter. I ran into the kitchen and filled the first jug I found handy with cold water and threw it without hesitation on her face. The cold water worked. Ben's mother promptly revived from her faint and with the help of all the people in the shop she struggled and got to her feet and supported by her daughter she limped to lament in Joyce's home.

Our little shop was freed for the next customers in line to shop, and thanks to the sensation our shop was busy like never before! (like a hot cake).

### **Thelma Lace**

The next daily systematic drinker of Coca-Cola was Mrs. Thelma Lace. She was a very prudent matron nearing her fortieth year of age. She was rather skinny. It was very hard for us to imagine that she was once up to 220 lbs. It was at the time when her husband was out in the Australian Army Front, and she was left alone in her Korben Street home with their small children. "I started to gain weight out of loneliness and frustration. I become a huge monster! I could not even take care of myself. Up into the steep slope in Foveaux street from your shop two women, one on each side, had to hold me so I would be able to make it. When I had to go to the doctor for an appointment, it was a horror story. "The doctor said that I ate extra food as a compensation for my loneliness" Thelma Lace told us. "How did you lose such weight?" Edmund and I asked. "Imagine, that the doctor recommended that I eat only hard-boiled eggs, vitamins and water, nothing more for weeks and weeks. Very soon such a monotonous diet was so repulsive, that I could only eat more out of simple hunger. That way I was losing comfortably and systematically, till I reached today's weight. Only one time I switched to eating only oranges and vitamins and nothing more. The same thing happened. Since then I kept my low weight, it is enough, when I remember the misery I felt in the state of that hideous fatness, right away my appetite is gone!" Mrs. Lace concluded her story.

Edmund and I said that we could not at all imagine her to be so huge! So several days later Mrs. Lace brought over one photo from her overweight days. She really looked like a monster. It was difficult to recognize her at all, but we had no choice but to believe her story.

One day we had the opportunity to hear another episode from her life. She was telling her woman friends, and as we worked in the shop pretended that we were not listening: It was right at the beginning of the war in the year '39 and before we had children. Bruce (her husband) was in Bonegilla in the military training camp. I was sure that Bruce would not arrive home that weekend, so I comfortably lay in bed- it was around noon- with John, my neighbor, in wonderful mental and emotional states. We were right "in the best," when I heard our front gate squeak. Only out of curiosity did I push the curtain aside to look- and it was Bruce himself! He arrived for the weekend! Man, the shock! It was beyond belief! One reads in novels and says to himself that it could not happen to me! We jumped up in a second from the bed. John just grabbed his pants and shot through the kitchen to the back porch. I don't even know where he pulled up his pants. In the one minute when Bruce pressed the handle on the door John was already jumping over the fence. That could have been quite a ruckus, namely if Bruce would know that in that bed was his neighbor and his friend. Bruce right away asked "How come that at noon you are still in bed?" I said that I did not feel well that day, perhaps that I was catching some flu, so I stayed in bed longer. "How come you did not write that you were coming home this weekend?" "I wanted to surprise you, Thelma" Bruce said. "You really surprised me. You really did Bruce!" I answered. You can imagine my heart was beating like a bell and it took sometime before I recovered from the shock! I will never forget that day!" Thelma Lace concluded her story. "You were both very lucky indeed!" commented friendly neighbors. And Edmund and I secretly agreed with them.

Thelma had two daughters, twins 10 years old, a son Buddy about 12 years old and the youngest, Jimmy, was 4 years old- at our stay in Foveaux street shop (in 1952).

At another time Thelma told us: "When Jimmy was born and we brought him home from the hospital still red and wrinkled in the face, Buddy looked him over very carefully from all angles. I asked: "Buddy, what do you say to your new brother?" Buddy was long silent and then he said rather sadly, "Why did we need just now to get a newborn? Right now the television is a sensation. Come on mom, for the same money we could buy a television set and send the baby back where he came from!" I took a deep breath and said: "That would be really difficult! I doubt if it is at all possible Buddy!" and that ended that!

Among the secrets which the lady patrons in our shop shared were the experiences of their own abortions committed with their own hands. Mostly Thelma Lace talked about those. We did not dare to ask what form they

chose to use, but we overheard that they used all kinds of desperate ways including metal coat hangers and various chemicals. When these women talked on this theme they put their heads close together and lowered their voices so we did not hear one word of it.

One hot evening when those women again congenially sipped their Coca-Cola in our shop, Mr. Bruce Lace stopped in to order an ice cream cone. "I have to sweeten my bitter and poor life with something!" he added somehow apologetically. Edmund pointedly looked directly at his big abdomen, which was protruding outward visibly from the speaker's shirt and commented: "Mr. Lace, you could not complain on undernourishment!" The women present in the shop started to giggle significantly and Mr. Lace looked down on his belly and responded: "You think that is all full of beer, but under that belly is only sorrow!" After these words his wife, Thelma, directed her eyes intentionally pointing underneath his belly and said deliberately loud: "Such a name for this I never heard yet, but I would say that tonight you gave it a very suitable new name!" Her women friends, knowing how often and how many times Thelma went through painful and illegal abortions, burst into uncontrollable laughter! Mr. Lace did not know what to say, besides his response would not be heard for all the loud laughs, so he disappeared into the street like a ghost.

### **Mrs. Maggy**

Mrs. Maggy also belonged to the morning group of friendly discussions. Mrs. Maggy had a handsome face framed by grayish curly hair. Her figure was plump and she limped. She did not have any children, but her heart belonged to her cats. Cats were her children. She had sixteen cats! She worked only a few hours a day and all her earned money went on cat food and cigarettes. At the very small Australian wages, cigarettes were very expensive fun. Mrs. Maggy and her husband were both smokers, Mr. Maggy was a bus driver and worked many hours. After shopping for food supplies and also for the cats and cigarettes, their money was gone. We knew the financial situation of all customers well. When they did not pay up their weekly bill completely, sometimes they had to explain to us their financial situation and where all their money went. We had to listen with serious faces and strict gravity, otherwise they would not pay their weekly bills.

On mornings when Mrs. Maggy worked she did not attend the Coca-Cola conference, the other women friends expressed their opinion that



sixteen cats in her small house was too much. Not one of them though, had the courage to say it to Mrs. Maggy's face. I did not know how many cats were there until one day Mrs. Maggy requested me to deliver her order to her home, so with her shopping order I entered her home. My impression was unforgettable. In the first place the cats' smelly stink surrounded me completely and inexorably. There was no air left for breathing! Instead of air there was only the cats' stinking smell. Obviously these cats were not choosy where to place their puddle or their excrement. Cats were all around: on tables, chairs, in my way and on the ground.

I put down the order and I tried to answer something civil to the grateful words of Mrs. Maggy, who was sick in bed that day, but the hair on my head was standing up in horror! My mind was repeating "Out, out in the fresh air before I would suffocate." I shot out of that house like a bullet. If someone would have asked me, I could have said that those cats were mostly ugly and upset by my visit; there must have been at least fifty of them!

By that home delivery somehow I fell into Mrs. Maggy's heart. There followed an era when Mrs. Maggy started to have big boils with puss over her entire body. She said they were very painful and no one knew what caused it. The lady doctor of Mrs. Maggy suggested that one large boil on her chest called a "carbuncle" she had to operate on. Mrs. Maggy was scared to death of the operation. Since she did not have any relatives in Sydney Mrs. Maggy asked me to accompany her to the doctor and support her with my presence. And so I went with this cat-lover to the doctor's office. From the moment the lady doctor grabbed the scalpel with her hand Mrs. Maggy started to roar like a bull! With such a strong voice that it must have been heard for miles around! The doctor did not pay a heck to her roaring and worked heartily on the carbuncle, squeezing all the puss out of it to the last drop. I felt very ashamed for Mrs. Maggy's roaring. Her roaring played on my nerves and exhausted me. To tell the truth, I did not know that a patient during an operation could have so much energy and élan! Since then I never accepted another volunteering service for Mrs. Maggy.

Some months later Mrs. Maggy came to our shop to tell me the good news. She discovered what caused her carbuncles. She was allergic to any form of pork. After she eliminated all pork from her diet the carbuncles never returned!

As I mentioned, Mrs. Maggy's husband was the bus driver. From time to time he stopped at his lunch break and came to us to buy a packet of cigarettes. His huge bus literally filled the little Korben street. It covered some 5-6 fronts of little houses with its enormous body.

I still have to mention about a situation in Australia about cigarettes. In the war years of the Second World War (1939-1945) there were some shortages in supplies, cigarettes included, so these were rationed. Since cigarettes were still in short supply in 1951-1954 they were rationed in exactly the same amount to the shops as they were sold in 1945. However, the shopkeeper could distribute them his own way. We were in high esteem by smokers as a consequence. They clung to us as customers and were careful not to overdraw their weekly bill, paying their bills diligently so they would not lose their right to their weekly ration of cigarettes. The smokers themselves ordered their boxes as "coffin-nails". But even such a scary title did not detract them from smoking. I guess smokers could buy packets of cigarettes on the free market elsewhere for higher prices. Therefore our lower prices of cigarettes were really appreciated.

After dinner our grocery shop became our "sweet shop". Our customers came for ice cream, sweet ice cream cocktails, candy, chocolate, fancy cookies and various combinations of drinks. And also for a little neighborly talk. It was because then the neighbors met others from their neighborhood, everyone knew everyone and also a lot about him and his or her life!"

### **Mrs. Turvey and her Family**

Mrs. Turvey belonged to the group of women sipping daily Coca-Cola in our little shop.

She was the poorest of all of them with the most kids, and the skinniest of all, nearly only "Skin and Bones." Always in black at their discussions in our shop and she kept one youngest child pressed to her right hip. Her figure, due to the weight of her child, was bending like a photograph, which was no wonder due to her skinny figure. Her black hair, always combed straight back, was forever falling on her face. We are not sure how many children she had, perhaps six. It was definitely more than she should have had to take care of watch out for and to nourish. We never saw Mr. Turvey in our shop and we only glimpsed him on our street, as they lived several houses from us. He was also skinny hunching and looked tired and worn out. Both Turveys were strong smokers and Mr. Turvey was also a strong drinker, as we heard. Mrs. Turvey had her first daughter while single, which grew up most probably at her grandmother's home. Mrs. Turvey therefore had to marry what was left over among men. We knew their eleven-year-old son Alvin, who was trying very hard to earn some

pennies anyway he could. He had a grown-up expression on his face and impressed us rather as an oldster in an immature body, than a young boy. There was seven year old Melody, three and half-year-old Neals, two year old Mickey and then baby boy, who grew up literally glued to his mother's hip.

To feed the whole family at breakfast everyday was physically a lot of work. Mrs. Turvey solved it by giving every child three cents and sending them into our shop to buy the broken sweet cookies. But her children seemed happy for their deal. We could not show our disdain about such an unnourishing breakfast. Perhaps one doesn't have a right to spoil the children's joy.

Jack Cross right from the very beginning informed us that Mrs. Turvey was neither a good nor skilled housekeeper. "She buys impulsively and unwisely and she is not able to manage their family financial situation." As a proof he said that once she was at home, completely without money and without any food and even in the shop she was above her weekly limit. "If the shopkeeper would let her, she would take more on her credit but she would never be able nor willing to re-pay it. Her creditor simply mustn't let her take more!"

Mrs. Turvey decided that she would put her nice clocks into a pawnshop, the only luxurious piece in her whole apartment! She took the clocks and marched with her children to the city to sell them or to pawn them. She received only about eleven pounds for them. You know that such shops give the seller only about one quarter or even about one fifth of the real value. Mrs. Turvey accepted it. When she was returning home she saw in a shop window an attractively decorated cream cake for nearly nine pounds. She could not resist and she bought it and right away started eating it with her children. On the way home they all nibbled on it. When she came back into Korben Street the children were hungry again and almost no money was left for the clock sale. For nine pounds she could have bought a lot from nourishing food, which would feed her family for many days. She is definitely not a wise housekeeper!" concluded Jack Cross.

We overheard from our ladies that Mrs. Turvey became pregnant many times, which she desperately did not want. Her form of abortion, because she could not afford it to be done by a medical doctor was terrifying! She used the straightened wire of a coat hanger and she perforated her womb. Then she bled and in a comatose condition they had to accept her in a State-financed hospital. Edmund and I felt sick when we heard this. In short, Mrs. Turvey was a pathetic case.

Mrs. Turvey always pressed the youngest child to her hip, like she could not separate from him even for a second. We felt that the child could never learn how to walk. As soon as the next child was born, from that moment she did not pay much attention to it. We saw the child in the street, left to itself even at meal times.

Jack Cross told us that at the beginning of his take-over of the shop he tried to give her bigger portions of everything but it did not really help the family. Mrs. Turvey smoked more cigarettes or slept longer more often and her children were still in the same situation. "Therefore one has to treat them exactly as the other customers," he concluded.

We liked little Neal very much. At the beginning of our grocery business Neal was not even three years old. Already he came by himself to buy sweets of his choice with his pennies. One day Edmund was fixing shelves in the space for customers. Into the otherwise empty shop came Neal and opened his hand with one penny. It was just right for one particular caramel. Edmund bent over the counter, took out the caramel and offered it to Neal. But Neal refused to close the deal. He was showing that Edmund should stand behind the counter in order to close the deal. Edmund moved behind the counter, accepted the one penny across the counter and passed the candy to Neal who was standing on tip toe, since he was much smaller than the counter. Neal was really our first customer after our take-over of the Foveaux shop. So his first penny was for good luck glued onto the wall for the whole time we had the shop.

One Sunday morning into our empty shop came Neil, Mrs. Turvey's three-year-old son. This time he was cleaned up, his hair combed and dressed in his Sunday outfit. He looked like a new boy. Actually we never realized before what a handsome boy he was! It was Edmund's duty that morning, but at that particular moment Edmund was in the cellar, where our toilet was located. Upon hearing the shop's bell ringing Edmund had to rush up to the shop a little upset. Upon seeing little Neil, Edmund was surprised by Neil's Sunday cleanliness and the Sunday outfit and when Edmund asked what Neil wanted he heard: "I came to you, to be yours! You have no children- you can have me!" Edmund was taken aback and called me.

We realized that little Neil paid us the biggest compliment a little child could pay to a childless couple! He came to us to be adopted. But we were not ready for parenthood yet. So we explained to Neil that his parents would not give him up (which was true), but that we loved him. We also gave him cookies and candies for his compliment. We never forgot this event.

Little Mickey was then only a little over two years old and since Mrs. Turvey already had a new baby (on her hip) little Mickey was often left alone and seen in the street half crawling and half walking. She also looked neglected and dirty. Through some Association, well-to-do couple took Mickey for a weekend or for several days to their home. They were returning her to our shop in Mrs. Turvey's care. Little Mickey was washed, combed and was dressed in a new pretty dress and a bonnet. She looked like a beautiful child, a precious doll! The child knew it and was beaming with pride, for everybody present in the shop admired her. We overheard the couple wanted to adopt Mickey, but Mrs. Turvey refused to give Mickey up, she said she loved her! Several days later Mickey was dusty in a worn-out outfit, unwashed, left in the street, left to herself. And so it was in the following months.

Then it happened. That day the child was left alone in the Korben Street through lunch time. Around 2 p.m. little Mickey decided to cross the street in the middle of the block to get home. From the back of Korben Street suddenly came a fast, huge truck, whose driver did not see little Mickey crawling across the street. We all heard the blow and the thump when the truck ran over the child.

When we ran outside the shop I saw Mrs. Turvey turning the corner and upon seeing the impact she jumped with shock and anger.

The child was dead instantly. Nobody said anything to the mother except to express sympathy. But even though she blamed the driver, we all were thinking, that two-year-old child did not belong in the middle of the street!

As I said, we all expressed our sympathy to the mother, but otherwise we stayed silent. We were all sorry for little Mickey.

### **Bobby and the Meat Cutter**

One afternoon our shop was full of customers when the repairman brought us a really sharp manual meat cutter. In order not to lose customers we paid the repairman fast, who put the cutter on the Coca-Cola icebox. We planned to put it away out of reach of anyone as soon as we could take care of our customers. But before we could do it, five-year-old Bobby ran into our shop. "Gosh, what is this?" he yelled excitedly and dashed to the cutter. "Is it for cutting?" Right away he put his little fat thumb on the edge of the cutter to make sure. The edge of the cutter cut deeply into his thumb and in seconds blood was shooting in all directions. It all happened in seconds. I

let the last customers wait as I rushed to help Bobby. I took him to the water tap in the kitchen and took care of his wound. I put disinfectant and band aids on the cut and wrapped the whole thumb. Edmund put away the cutter, out of the reach of children and customers. Bobby did not shed one tear, but watched me taking care of him. We praised Bobby for his courage and advised him that next time not to try the sharpness of an instrument on his own body. For his bravery and to ease our own feeling of guilt, we filled a bag with cookies and goodies for him. We expected that Bobby's parents would show up that evening to ask about the incident or even to scold us but nobody came.

About ten days later Bobby again came to our shop with his thumb completely healed but pointed ostentatiously up. He rushed right away to our Coca-Cola ice chest. "Where is the meat cutter?" he inquired eagerly. I asked with irony: "Do you want to cut your thumb again?" and to our surprise Bobby sincerely replied: "Yes, if you would give me a bag of goodies again! Then of course!"

### **Bill and His Money**

On the very end of Korben street was a small yellow house from where six- year-old Bill came daily to buy small items. It was a custom in those areas to buy only as much as was needed in that moment. Most households there did not have a refrigerator. They were sending their children often since they were so close to us. The children came gladly.

One day Bill came running all upset, nearly screaming that grandpa Harry is beating up his grandmother, who sent him to us to call the police. This was a great dilemma for us! Can we trust a small child? Could we take such responsibility and call the police? On the other hand, the image of a woman, who was begging us for help while a strong man was beating her, bothered us. Bill kept screaming to us, during our decision-making moments "Help my grandma, please, please!"

Just then in walked our daily patron, Mrs. Sutton. She knew all the people in the neighborhood upside down, so we turned to her for her advice, and nearly overwhelmed her with our excitement and tension.

Yet, Mrs. Sutton knew right away what to do! To not call the police. Several owners of this shop before us on the insistence of a child called the police. Then in minutes when two officers arrived at the couple's house, the couple was standing in front of their home amicably holding hands. They completely denied their dramatic fight. The policemen were angry and

stopped at the shop to “give it” to the owners. They clearly said, that the report of a small child is not serious enough by law to call the police. “You have to see the incident with your own eyes, in order to be eligible to make such a report. Or the woman herself has to submit the report.

We were grateful to Mrs. Sutton for helping us to solve our moral dilemma.

Little Bill did not return that same afternoon but the following days he came like if nothing ever happened. It was obvious that the family situation was solved that evening in an amicable way.

One day Edmund, who had and has a nose like a police dog, started to complain that something smelled strongly in our shop with a lavatory odor. He used his sensitive nose on all corners of the shop, till he discovered the smell was coming from the cash register. In there he found one ten-pound bank note which little Bill had brought. Shortly after that he ran into the shop again and bought three eggs, and paid with a relatively big bank note, again very stinky. A touchy question: Do we have a duty to keep taking stinky bank notes from our customers?

Edmund repeated the proverbs of his mother: “Honestly earned money never stinks!” They were also the words of Roman ruler Tiberius! Therefore we decided not to refuse such bank notes, but always put them right away into a sealed plastic bag and the first Monday to take them to the bank for deposit.

Out of curiosity we asked little Bill how his family came to such bank notes? Bill told it with childish eagerness. The grandmother had the lease to the house and took care of little Bill. Friend Harry moved into grandma’s house some months before and probably under his influence grandmother decided to sell her place. They offered “key money” was too tempting to refuse even though it was illegal! Something like one half had to be paid in advance. It was always a big packet of bank notes for a poor person or family.

Then the grandmother quarreled with Harry how to use the money. In one point of the fight grandmother became really angry and threw the whole bundle into the full night pot. After a while she changed her mind and took the bank notes out of its stinking prison and then she tried to wash out the odor in a soup bath and hung them on the laundry line with laundry pegs like she hangs the linen.

When the odor did not disappear, but filled the whole house, she decided to spend them. When she discovered that we did not refuse them all afternoon, she was sending little Bill in to buy something small in order to get rid of them in one day.

Next Monday morning we hurried to the bank to deposit our accumulated cash. Usually there were huge brass pennies, heavy like stones. On the weekends we always collected several hundred. It needed a strong person to carry them to the bank.

In several weeks there came the day when Bill's grandmother with the whole family was due to leave her home of many years. Little Bill came especially to say goodbye to us by shaking hands. We were sorry to lose him.

But what was our surprise, when little Bill showed up in our shop some three hours later! "So you did not move out?" wondered Edmund. "We did not" answered Bill. "What happened?" we inquired. "We went with Grandma, Grandfather Harry and much luggage to the railroad station. There Grandpa Harry said: "Give me the money and I will go buy the tickets for the railroad trip!" Then grandma started to separate the money for tickets, but Grandpa Harry said: "Give me all the money, I will take the care of it for you!" So grandma gave him all the money and he went to buy the tickets." Edmund finished the story: "And Grandfather Harry never showed up with tickets nor without the tickets!" Little Bill only shook his head. There was nothing left to do for Bill's grandmother, but to return to her old home, since without money she could not travel anywhere. "The new tenants had not moved in yet, the house was still empty?" Little Bill shook his head again in agreement. "So Harry indeed took care of all the money!" confirmed Edmund.

We felt sorry for the new intended tenants, who most probably lost all their deposit money. Because it was illegal and against the law in Australia to pay "Key money," and the deposit was paid in cash (never by check) such a case was not possible to prove in court.

For us this episode had a good ending, because Little Bill stayed our regular and good customer.

### **The Madson Family**

The Madson family lived in the corner house opposite us at Foveaux and Korben Street. It was a complicated family which we learned by chance in an unpleasant way, I must add. The Australian government wanted to make it easier for the lowest class of Australians, so they issued a law that on all white bread only half a penny profit could be made on each loaf. It was so little, that no shopkeeper could afford to hold any extra bread in his



stock. Since bakeries would not accept stale leftover bread, which was why each loaf had to be obligatorily ordered in the morning.

One of the first evenings there came into our shop a nice looking girl who was about 17 years old, she asked in pleasant voice if we had any bread left to sell. Edmund asked what her name was and she said "Madson." Edmund looked on our list of ordered bread and crossed "Madson" off the order and sold her the bread. About 20 minutes later a woman walked in, nearly forty, and asked for the bread reserved in the "Madson" name. "I already sold it to your daughter," explained Edmund. "How old was she?" asked the middle-aged Mrs. Madson in a suspicious voice. "About 17." "I thought so," responded the woman in an angry tone. "That was my niece. She belongs to a different household! I reserved one loaf this morning, here and now I want it! I am sure that living on the upper floor Madson did not order it!" But there wasn't any bread left in the shelf. "Ask, and perhaps they would let you have half of it!" Advised Edmund. "I cannot, we are not on speaking terms with them." Angrily objected the woman. "But you know each other, isn't it so?" "I know them for sure, since Magdalena is my own sister," retorted woman. "And you do not speak with them?" wondered Edmund. "I do not! And now she even devoured my bread! She is getting on my nerves more and more!" indignantly added the woman and after a silent interval she added angrily, "And the next time I reserve bread in the morning, give it only to me!" She shook her blond hair and left with majestic disdain.

The mysterious situation of the Madson family was explained to us the next morning by our Coca-Cola lady patrons. "Jack Kross did not tell you about them? How could he forget?" they wondered. "The bread Madson's daughter bought?" inquired Edmund. "Yes" they said. "The woman who was angry that she did not get the bread was Mr. Madson's wife?" "No, that was his girl-friend Marie, who lives with him!" "Who is the Magdalena with whom she was angry for taking her bread?" "That was her sister, the wife of Mr. Madson!" "Why don't they speak to each other?" "This is a long story. Let's rather start from the very beginning!" advised the ladies.

And thus we learned that Mr. Madson came from Sweden and married Magdalena, an Australian, and they had a daughter, Adela, now 17-years-old. Mr. Madson was a hard working accountant, but some years back he lost his job and could not find another in Sydney. At last he found a job in another Australian state, in Queensland. Therefore he was forced to live far from his family. When two years later when he returned to Sydney he found out that his wife had fallen in love with their tenant, who was ten years

younger. He was crushed. She not only admitted that she lived with Gary, but she also said she would not give up Gary, and that she did not want Mr. Madson any more! Mr. Madson was of a mild disposition and such rejection by his wife made him completely wretched.

I already mentioned how hard and dragged out and nearly impossible divorces were in Australia. Also, due to great shortages of empty apartments in Sydney, they agreed that Mr. Madson would take the bottom floor of the building, and Magdalena Madson, with her lover, would live in the upper floor of the building. Their daughter decided to live with her mother. Sometime later the divorced sister of Magdalena Madson Marie arrived for a visit. As she felt Mr. Madson to be so lonely, living alone at the bottom floor of the building, they shared their broken hopes and hurts 'till "they fell for each other" and Marie moved into the lower part of the building with Mr. Madson. It stayed that way for several years.

That was the situation when Edmund and I took over the shop on the opposite corner. The Madson families did not speak to each other, at least that way they would not quarrel.

In spite of it there were some dramatic events. We witnessed one conflict on the balcony opposite our bedroom. One day we heard noises, screams and yells and something like fights going on from the balcony. Balconies were mostly covered by canvasses from the outside. The "circle of our patronizing ladies" explained the next morning what was going on.

On the top balcony, Magdalenas daughter, Adela, slept. In Sydney, summer nights were very hot and sultry. That's why many people slept outside in the fresh air, some even the whole year round. They called it "Sleep-out." The balcony was protected by canvas from rain, hot sun rays and from the inquisitive eyes of their neighbors. Mrs. Magdalena's lover was much younger and he had eyes for the attractive curves of the much younger Adela. To our lady friends it was not clear, if he approached Adela before or did it happened that night for the first time! But when Mrs. Magdalena returned the previous day from her work somewhat earlier, she found her lover Gary making love to her daughter on the balcony. She became very enraged. She poured out her anger on Gary. She grabbed near-by scissors and with full force she hit Gary with them. He fought back. In those moments, it was hard to distinguish who was fighting with whom or was yelling what words. In any case, they were words of strong content.

Edmund and I were not at that time so knowledgeable in English terminology, therefore we missed many words. We could see that our lady customers were not depressed from such events in their neighborhood, but

on the contrary it inspired them for an exciting debate. They even giggled while sipping drinks.

When any member of this complicated family appeared the following days in our shop they always acted with dignity—as if “nothing happened.” It was clear to us that their situation was somehow solved. Gary had to be a good boy and straighten out his act, otherwise he would have to move out. As you know, the rent situation in Sydney was very precocious!

About one year later Marie, the household companion of Mr. Madson, became pregnant. As we later learned from our local newspaper, Mr. Madson asked for a divorce. He wanted to become the legitimate and proper father for the future child. One day after the court hearing of the Madson case we read in the local newspaper how the case proceeded. Mrs. Magdalena Madson did not have any objections to the divorce, therefore it was expected that the divorce would be granted. The Madsons had not lived together over seven years, which was the condition. But somehow the presiding judge learned that both Madson couples lived in the same building. When he learned that they always agreed how to cover the common expenses for water, rent, and electricity, he became very upset. He proclaimed angrily: “What kind of people are these Madsons? They live under one roof, Mr. Madson on the lower floor, and Mrs. Madson on the upper floor with her lover and never fought, or even quarreled. And Mr. Madson, when he learned about his wife’s infidelity, he never even punched her boyfriend in the mouth! Such people do not deserve a divorce! The divorce is the reward to one side for suffering and injustice. Such a party should be an example of proper behavior! Here both parties are guilty! They do not deserve the merit of the divorce! Their request for divorce is rejected!”

We could not understand such a decision and neither could our neighbors. The marriage of Madson did not exist for more than seven years. They both wished for the divorce and did not have a problem with the division of properties. Mr. Madson admitted his fathering of the coming child with Mrs. Marie. His own daughter was near adulthood and was self-supporting. Mr. Madson, himself, was nearly 50 years old and he wanted to make the future of his new child secure.

He came to our shop the next day and sadly admitted that the Australian way of thinking was incomprehensible to him. It meant they had to stay in the marriage, which did not exist anymore. His own wife was the one who destroyed their marriage and did not want him as her husband. She openly admitted it. “What is left for me to do?” He put such question with resignation to himself. “That judge wanted to hear that I fought with Gary

and called him insulting names, like that would have solved the problem! That is the Australian way of acting and thinking! The only thing I want to do is be a good father to my child when it is be born. You know, being rejected by my own wife, that I appreciate the love of Marie and also that she wants to give me a little child at my old age. And that she trusts me!"

We were of the opinion that Mr. Madson was a gentleman and had good character—and that the particular judge had a crooked character and did not think logically.

When the child was born, it was a lovely little girl with blond hair. Mr. Madson brought her time to time to our shop, always charmingly dressed to show off his daughter. It was clear beyond any doubt, that he loved that child dearly.

What is your opinion of this case, my dear reader?

### **Frankie and Tom**

One day Tom wandered into our shop. He was over 75 years old, but even though his face was covered with a beard and mustache it was clear that he used to be handsome. He told Edmund that he was angry at himself because he spent his monthly pension mostly on drinks and at the present moment he was hungry and all his money was gone! We talked a little and in the end we agreed that he would do a little work for us like cleaning, painting walls, tidying the shelves, folding the boxes and the wages he would earn in our shop he would spend in our shop on food and soft drinks only. If any money would be left it would be written as "credit," which would be at his disposition. We had to promise that even if he would be angry or begged or insisted on cash, we would give him only merchandise, but never money, which he could spend on alcohol.

That started our friendship with Tom. He was pleasant and witty, so the cooperation worked well. Once when he was picking his merchandise in our shop our neighbor Frankie came in.

Frankie was a woman of large dimensions and golden heart. She could have been in her seventies. You know that we could not ask her age, so we are only guessing. She lived in a big stone house on Foveaux Street, right next to us down the hill. Frankie was only a tenant there, but according those rent control rules, it was as good as if she owned it. I have to add that Frankie had a golden heart when she was in a good mood and when she had money, and then she had the heart of a "Bravado." She entered with her little Chihuahua dog, Pepe, in her arms. Right in the doorway she

announced: "Double ice cream portion for me, for Pepe and for every child, who shows up in the shop! And also for every grownup who wants ice cream from Frankie!" People stopped shopping and our shop turned into an ice cream FIESTA. Edmund and I filled big portions of ice cream into cones, one customer after another. Customers called out their favorite ice cream flavors. Even children sitting on the sidewalk were invited into the ice cream FIESTA! Little dog Pepe received a paper plate and he licked his double portion with such delight that he started to shake with excitement. I did not know before this, that dogs could even eat ice cream! Frankie was the queen of the moment and the queen of the ice cream FIESTA. Then she ordered the best delicacies for herself and with arms full of goodies and with the air of the Duches of Foveaux Street she left the shop.

I said that Frankie had a golden heart if she was in a good mood. She also had a sharp tongue and could be scary when someone upset her. Thank goodness it was never us! You heard how grand she was after receiving her monthly check. The end of each paycheck era she shuffled into our shop with arms full of empty bottles. We had to count them carefully, as some of them had 10 cents, some were 5 cents and others even 3 cents deposit. Whatever the total was it was the amount for which with our help she had to find something for her lunch or dinner. We tried 'till we found something. That was the time when Frankie was humble, meek and modest. If it would not be for the face resemblance and the little Chihuahua, one could think that there were two different people coming out of the same residence. She was handed to us by Jack Cross as a "for cash only" Customer. Since Frankie did not like to pay debts, we stayed within the rule, "cash only." Frankie shopped with cash (or the deposit amount from the empty bottles.)

One particular afternoon Tom Bradwell was picking his wages in his food shopping when Frankie entered. They did not know each other, but they were eyeing one another, so we introduced them. Soon Tom bought a handful of miniature candies called "conversation candies" in shapes of little hearts, letters or doves. Then he selected one which was printed significantly in blue: "You are my type" and pointedly asked Edmund to give it to Frankie. Frankie read the inscription and if I was not mistaken she blushed and ordered an armful of conversation candies herself. Moments later she selected a pink letter-shaped candy and gave it to Edmund for Tom. Tom read it and his eyes sparkled with excitement. On it was "I relish you." For Toms whiskers we could not say if he also blushed or not, but it was not impossible. He selected a candy that read: "Be my Valentine," and again asked Edmund to pass it on to Frankie. It meant that Edmund became the "postillion D'Amor," what he quite liked, since he believed that love

man at that time was beyond himself with anger and frustration. He nearly lost his voice when in a wispy shaky voice mutter; "cut, cut, cut, cut" while hitting his hand rapidly. Our customers were burning with curiosity, as to what he wanted. They started guessing among themselves and even wanted to bet among themselves what it could be.

The Chinese man shot out of our shop and with a threatening voice yelled that he will bring one such item to show us that we have it in stock! We were not sure if he was mad at us, or the shop full of excited customers, himself, or at the whole world!

In about 15 minutes he returned victoriously, holding in hand a set of cards for his gambling activity. He wanted to buy cards! His fast chopping hand movements were meant to suggest the shuffling of cards. Not one of us got the clue. The Chinese man bought new sets of playing cards and our customers relaxed and started to debate among themselves. De facto the whole episode made them feel closer.

### **Maltezians**

Only three doors from us a large family from Malta lived on Korben Street. They had a total of seventeen children. One would imagine that a family with seventeen children their home would be a mess. But the opposite was the truth.

It was the most orderly family on the whole street. The secret of success was that the children cooperated in doing the household chores. Of course we did not know it from the beginning. We only knew that their six-year-old Tony kept coming persistently to our shop only for large orange sodas. We also saw him pick up empty bottles for the deposit money he collected in our shop and that was his pocket money. Only once did he romp with older boys and became a nuisance. Edmund threatened that he would tell on him to his father. Tony right away straightened up and begged us not to tell his father. We heard that the family bought all other food where they found the lowest prices. It seemed that the Maltesian family always had money for all they needed. Their children were always carefully washed, well dressed and nourished. From time to time we noticed seven-year-old Marta taking care of the youngest kid of the family.

One day Tony came to our shop and in a serious voice announced that he came to say goodbye to us. "You are moving out of this area?" we wondered aloud. "No, we are not moving out, but my older brother, Andy, found a job yesterday, when he concluded freshmen year of high school (at

the age of fourteen).” We continued, “And what does that mean?” “It means that all our family responsibilities will be shifted. I will not be shopping with you anymore. I will be helping in the house with cleaning and such. Marie will take over my work—the shopping.” Thus we learned that duties in the house meant making beds, washing dishes, helping with preparation for cooking, the serving of three meals daily and such.

When the oldest of the children at home started to work outside, all of the house duties shifted to the next level. We also learned that the outside working offspring has to give one-third of his net income to his parents for his living expenses there, and contribute to the household. The second third of his income must be deposited into his new savings account and he was not permitted to touch it ‘till his eighteen birthday. The last third was free for the earner for the spending of his choice: The savings were not big, but after four years of systematic savings, any young Maltezan was able to make deposits for a small home or car.

Other young Australian workers in our area spent their money on Coca-Cola, ice cream and cigarettes and after three or four years of that had absolutely nothing to their name.

We could only admire the system of the Maltese family. I forgot to mention that the father worked outside sometimes, but for some months did not work outside the home. They received 10 shillings per child as social contributions from the government. The oldest daughter already had her own home and family. The next son worked outside, so the family managed well their limited money.

### **The Silver Paint**

When we successfully painted and decorated the topside of the house with an ice cream cone and other attractive advertisements, it became obvious that the lower walls of our house also needed painting, as they looked really shabby. Mainly to protect the walls from the rains and hard weather. We were looking for capable and low-priced painters. One day Harry came from America with an acceptable offer for us. Thanks to the steep hill, only the higher walls needed ladders for work. The lower walls were easier to reach. We agreed on an acceptable price for cleaning and for both foundation and surface paint. Otherwise we felt relieved, since every other worry and care belonged to Harry. But the next morning an oldish man came, demanding a brush and paints from us. He said that he was hired by Harry to do the painting on our house.

When Harry did not show up, this oldish man with quite a protruding tummy turned up with a bucket of silver paint in his hands and a toothbrush. And I repeat, "With a toothbrush!" He started to paint in snail speed the side of the neighbors' balcony. Perhaps you have seen such ornamental balconies of corrugated iron decorations with endless spirals and twists. The houses in nineteenth-Century British territories polluted the cities all over. Perhaps in the time of British expansion, when they were new, and mostly painted they looked attractive but later when all rusty and dusty they looked shamefully ugly—at least in our eyes.

"That could not be true" I lamented to Edmund. "We ordered off—white—color paints for our building from Harry! On top of it that balcony doesn't belong to our house! And with a tooth brush it would take weeks and weeks of work to cover the entire bottom part of our building! But Edmund was of the opinion that we should not either warn nor disturb the oldish man. Members of his family are from time to time our customers. Why should we upset him? He did not ask us and we did not made any deal with him!" So I did not dare do anything.

Painting with a toothbrush on ornamental, rusty, corrugated ornaments of the neighbor's balcony advanced indeed at a snail's pace. The oldish man hour after hour worked in the searing hot Sydney noon sun and meticulously covered inch after inch the one side of the balcony with silver paint.

I had a strong urge to tell him that his work was all in vain in the wrong place, but Edmund was dead set against it. The longer the painting continued, the more difficult it was to tell him! At sunset one side of our neighbor's balcony, almost one yard by one yard shone provocatively with silver glare! It was like a call from another world, like an exclamation point in a sea of dark dusty buildings. For many days after neither the oldish man nor Harry showed up. Then came the day when the strong voice of Harry and the oldish man were heard outside our shop. We could have well imagined the content of their quarrel!

Some days later two muscular men appeared and on a suspended bridge started to paint with huge brushes. With large strokes they systematically covered the walls of our building. First they washed the walls, then they covered the walls with foundation paint and then worked with surface oil paints. In two days the work was finished. The building looked larger than ever before and shone with light and cleanness. We paid Harry the agreed amount and felt very proud of the whole project.

In the following two years there shone on us one piece of a neighbor's balcony, whenever we looked that way! At sunset in particular, it glared with an unrealistic glare like from another world. We had to smile



when we thought of as to how many people it was a puzzle. Why and how this piece of corrugated balcony came to its provocatively silver color? Perhaps no one guessed!

### **Daigoes**

Perhaps you don't even know who "Daigoes" are or what it means. Well, in Sydney, Australia at that time (in the 1950s) it was a twisted name from a Spanish original name, Diegos. It meant "Italian immigrants." It was supposed to be a degrading name. For British immigrants the label was "Pommies" and it had its roots from the pomegranate, which is a reddish tropical fruit. The cheeks of English immigrants after several weeks of strong Australian sun became a strong pinkish color, so they were known as "Pommies". We also heard in Melbourne and Sydney the nickname "Balts." It belonged to immigrants from Baltic States as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Australians did not have the smallest knowledge about the geographic layout of European nations, and used these nicknames without discrimination on any immigrant, anytime they wanted to. Australians could not even fathom that many nations and many languages were existing on such a relatively small area as the European Continent.

So it happened that a handful of teenagers from time to time stuck their heads into our shop, yelled "Daigoes," laughed aloud and ran away. When it happened more often, mainly in the presence of our regular customers, we started to feel disgusted by it. Often we saw with them about a thirteen-year-old rascal they called "Chuck." Sometimes he even yelled at us while he was alone. Sometimes we answered: "If you will not stop, we will tell your father on you!" And Chuck yelled back he had no father and his older brother never ever does anything to him because he doesn't care! So we decided we would do something to stop him ourselves! Only Chuck always ran out after such yelling. We usually stood behind the counter from where we had to run to another part of the shop before one could run into the shop itself and then into the streets. By the time we were on the street Chuck was far from our reach. Chuck could run fast.

So we invented another strategy, in the event of another yelling of "Daigoes" by Chuck. One of us would stay visibly behind the counter and the second member of our family would descend into the cellar and out through the back door to Foveaux Street, downhill, along the building and would approach unnoticed back to our shop. Our chances to catch Chuck would be much better. And that was what happened when the next invasion of Chuck occurred. Edmund was standing right behind the counter as I

descended through the back door into the street and, unnoticed, I ran into the shop and to the surprised Chuck! I caught him in the middle of Korben Street and I beat him like if I was his mother and I beat him hard!

I remember the surprised look in his eyes, which expressed something like "Such a lady, who could guess that she could run and fight like a guy!" I ended with threats, "You show up once more yelling in our shop and you will get another beating!" The youngster ran away crying and yelling that he will bring his brother to us! The whole event occurred at sunset time, the closing time of our shop. The older brother, who seemed to be 26 years old, appeared with Chuck. We were ready for him.

We explained to the older brother that Chuck was yelling "Daigoes" in our shop, often in the presence of other customers. Then he said that he doesn't have a father and his older brother never punishes him, and that he doesn't care what Chuck is doing! We explained to him, "It is really better for you that we wanted to take care of it ourselves, because we would have the only option to call the police and start proceedings as on a juvenile without supervision." You would then have a lot of complications with the law and other unpleasant happenings. What, otherwise, could one do with an immature and misbehaving teenager?" we argued. The older brother did not know anything about the name calling in our shop or other misbehaving his brother had done in our shop. He turned to Chuck and asked: "Is it true that you were yelling 'Daigoes' at the owners of this shop?" Chuck at this point became infuriated with his brother and kicked him in his calf and yelled, "Whose side are you on?"

That really convinced the brother about the misbehavior of Chuck and it angered him. He gave him quite a beating himself, right in front of our own eyes. Then he apologized for his brother's behavior and asked us for a pack of Australian cigarettes. We were more than glad to oblige. Then they both left. We only heard "Just wait, you will get it again at home, with interest!" Before they disappeared into the darkness. I am glad I can add that after that night we never heard neither Chuck nor his companions ever again yelling at us!

Even more gladly, I can add that after this episode I did not need to use my fast legs or my fists ever again for such similar occasions.

### **About the Raw Egg**

The weeks, even months, were passing by fast in our shop on Foveaux street. We were busily engaged with customers from the earliest morning

hours until very late at night. The closing was at 10 pm but on hot evenings customers were beating on our doors after ten and begging for cold drinks or ice cream. On that particular street, our shop was the only place with a refrigerator. Edmund and I both liked business and tried to please our customers whenever we could. Only when we had time to count the huge brass pennies and shillings could we find out how many pounds we really sold that day and what the gross turnover was. When we collected several hundred pennies we had to drag them to the bank next morning to get rid of them. We never stopped wondering why the Australian government made them so heavy! We felt sorry for the streetcar conductors who were carrying their full cash register on their tummy.

In hot Sydney nights, only after closing the shop and counting our gross turnover could we step out together into Sydney streets for romantic strolls. We liked to gaze on the dark sky above us and see the southern cross and stars above our heads. Edmund, since his youth, was fascinated by astronomy and thanks to his terrific memory he was tirelessly narrating on the mysteries of the universe.

Edmund and I grew up under the Milky Sky with millions of stars above us. Even though we were fascinated by the beauty of the Southern Cross, we had the impression that Australian skies were somehow robbed of stars.

When I mentioned the heavy coins of Australian currency around 1950, it reminds me how we suffered with our cash register because of those coins! Our cash register was a very plain drawer with little sections. Right under the cash register was placed a big box with many levels of fresh, big brown eggs. When a seller pulled too hard on the drawer, the whole drawer shot out. Then each heavy coin with gusto fell directly down onto one big egg and cut through the shell like a knife! The result was neither the egg nor the penny were good afterwards. The coins were gluey with raw egg, and each egg was doomed to be broken in order that one could get to the unappealing messy coin. The work itself was a messy task!

You can believe me, that in those times we had egg omelets for lunch as well as for dinner. Omelets with vegetables, omelets with preserves, omelets with whipped cream, omelets with cheese and omelets in many other forms. After a while, just to see an omelet made us sick!

Once such an egg disaster upset Edmund so much that he swore (in Czech language) and grabbed one completely sound fresh egg and with full force he threw it on the floor. It was really an upsetting incident, but all broken eggs at least kept their shape and skin patiently 'till we broke them in the kitchen and spilled the raw contents into a dish. Edmund's broken egg

spread unsightly on the uneven old wooden floor and stayed, tastelessly messing up the floor.

I, at that time, was still the newlywed wife who tried to accommodate the wishes of my husband to the maximum. But that raw egg spread all over the floor was too much for me “Why should I, the innocent bystander, clean up such mess?” I asked silently. I realized that Edmund grew up in a household where helpers were available and he never had to clean up a broken egg off the floor! Therefore he didn’t know what a distasteful, stomach-upsetting task it was! So I decided to take the strategic retreat! I ran up the stairway to the second floor and devoted my time to work there.

When after a long time I returned, the floor was already swept clean, but in the shop there was ominous silence.

Only several weeks later Edmund commented on the egg episode of his: “That task of cleaning raw egg from the floor was one of the worst acts that I ever had to do! The raw egg reminded me of snouts! It constantly spread over the floor! It was horrible work! At the end of my cleaning I promised myself that I would never break another raw egg again, at least not deliberately!” That was what I wanted to hear. And I am the witness that he really kept his promise!

By the way, we found another corner of our shop to store our supply of raw eggs for sale. Edmund also put an additional stopper at the end of the drawer for the silver money, and that minimized our egg calamity from that day on.

### **The Gramophone Record**

During the Sydney summers—December ‘till March, when the day temperatures were over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (41degrees Celsius) Georgina could only sleep when the windows were completely open, mainly because the old houses there did not have air conditioning. Then again loud noises were heard from all the neighbors. On one such hot night, in a house opposite ours, we heard intensively loud quarreling voices. One voice was masculine and the other was feminine. It started at eight in the evening and with small intervals continued till midnight. This noise mixed with the voices of angry neighbors, who shouted phrases like “Keep quiet, so we can sleep!” Or “Keep your big trap shut” or “If you do not stop, you rascals, we are going to stop you!” and such threats until around midnight. Around midnight we heard a crackling noise and then there was a silence till morning.

The next day, our sipping Coca-Cola lady customers were talking through the whole episode of the quarrelsome neighbors. Only then we learned that Mr. and Mrs. McCorry quarreled because of the gramophone record Mr. McCorry bought. She disagreed with her husband buying a record, with its content, eventual use of it and the price. Since both Mr. and Mrs. McCorry strongly disagreed in their points of view, a fiery debate occurred.

Our lady customers talked about the matter from many different angles. Mrs. Sutter concluded the debate with her decisive words: "I am really sorry that Mrs. McCorry did not break the fateful gramophone record on Mr. McCorry's head, at eight p. m. instead of midnight. We all could have slept four hours longer that night!"

And everyone, including us, agreed with her without a debate!

### **The Music Lover**

An older gentleman with a serious appearance, even in a somewhat worn-out jacket, stopped in our shop. We had never seen him before.

Edmund was just standing behind the counter and our three persistent lady customers were congenially sipping Coca-Colas.

The older gentlemen got closer to Edmund and bent his head rather intimately to him and whispered into his ear: "Are you a music lover?" Edmund without a word nodded his head in agreement. "Then put a dime on the counter!" said the older man. Perhaps out of curiosity as to what would follow, Edmund laid the little silver coin on the counter. The visitor then pulled out of his vest a little whistle and then got even closer to Edmund's ear so that no one in the shop would benefit from the following concert, and then he whistled: "Peep, peep, peep." Three tones, nothing more. Then he bowed deeply, swept the silver coin from the counter and disappeared from the shop like a ghost.

There followed a silent moment of all three in the store, and then followed a stormy laugh from all of us. The three ladies laughed so loud, and so passionately that they could not stop. Then Mrs. Sutton proclaimed that it was the shortest concert she ever heard—and that she had to go home to change her underwear! Such a concert really overwhelmed her!

### **Georgina—The Coin Collector**

I don't know if I ever mentioned that I was an enthusiastic coin collector since I was ten years old.

My first trophies were a czarist Russian 500 Rubles banknote with the czar Peter the Great's transparent image on the banknote, beautifully decorated from the year 1900 and also a 100 Rubles banknote with Katerina the Great, the Russian czarina. I found these banknotes in the attic of our family house on Jahodnice (on the outside of Prague) among the souvenirs of my father from the time of the First World War. He was the legionnaire of the Czechoslovakian Army (from 1915-1920) in Russia, Siberia and Manchuria. There were also some coins from Japan and China. I brought these trophies down from the attic to show them to my father and to ask him what these banknotes meant in value. I also wanted to know the value they had at the present time. When I showed the banknotes to him his eyes glowed with enthusiasm and his face expressed emotion. "Well, if I would have had these banknotes as a Russian war captive in the year 1916 or 1917 that would have really have meant something!" he answered with a tender voice. "What could you have bought for them then?" I wanted to know. "Many things! I would have lived like a king for a whole month!" On his face it was visible what he imagined if he had lived there for a month.

In my young inexperienced mind I could not visualize how young men could live like a king. So I at least asked, "What value have these banknotes today?" My father's eyes lost their gleam when he answered: "Today they do not have any value! Today you cannot buy anything with them!" He added quite prosaically, "They have perhaps the value of the paper itself!"

I looked again at the newly found banknotes and it seemed to me that when I looked at them I could imagine all the glory, riches and power which such a kingdom represented in its time. It even seemed to me that I could visualize such a far away country. So I asked my father if he could give me those banknotes. My father waved his hand and said "Take them. I did not know I even had them!" He even gave me some coins from China and Japan, which had stayed in his luggage from his and my mother's voyage around the world in 1920, when they sailed from Vladivostok to Paris.

And that was the moment when the coin collector in me was born. My decision to travel and see the world crystallized in me the desire to hold those little coins or paper banknotes from far away countries and different cultures. It impressed me as a greeting, a very personal greeting for me from far away places and far away times like a promise that those distant places I would see one day.

It was also fascinating to find on a globe, or in the Atlas, exotic countries from where my “greetings” came. It even seemed to me, as if I were in those places, if only in my mind.

I liked to show my collection to my parents visitors who came to our home. As a pleasant consequence, their guests kept bringing me their occasionally forgotten foreign coins, or even their own collections of coins from other countries. This way my own collection was growing rapidly.

When Edmund and I, as newly weds, left our Czech homeland for political reasons in 1948, we had to leave everything behind, including my coin collection.

Then one day unexpectedly, children started to come into our Foveaux Street Sydney Shop bringing coins from Hong-Kong, Japan, Malai, China and also from other countries. After all, Sydney was a city with a Navy base and many older sailors’ brothers of our little neighbors were returning from their voyages with foreign money forgotten in their pockets. When little customers offered me foreign coins, I could not resist my “old passion” and I rewarded them with sweet pastry or candy according to their wish. When the information and news went around, other children kept bringing me coins, all kinds of coins from foreign countries around the world.

Then I overheard one little boy, in a lowered voice, as he was informing a little buddy of his: “Give this coin to Georgina, she doesn’t know it is not money!”

I upgraded the size of the can for my coin collection and there I gathered my booty. For other connecting activities there was no time. Later, this was the base of my next numismatic collection.

## **The System**

Opposite our little shop on Foveax Street stood a four story building, containing a textile factory. The owner was Jewish, most of his thirty employees were Jewish and his foreman was Jewish, and so we learned about their system. Their employees were also occasionally our customers.

It was discovered that one of the foremen stayed in the workshop on weekends and on some evenings, from the bosses material, he sewed together many garments, which he smuggled out and sold on the black market.

When the boss learned about the theft, instead of calling the police he called a local rabbi. The rabbi, in consideration that the two involved men were of Jewish origin, used the Jewish way. They calculated how much

material the foreman used for his illegal activity, how much electricity was used and other damages or cost to the owner of his textile business and specified it in local money amounts. Then he called them all together and requested in consideration that since all belonged to the same religion for the owner not to report the theft to the police, but to forgive and to be lenient. From the culprit the rabbi demanded a promise, that nothing illegal would be done by him or stolen any more. He also had to promise that all the calculated damage would be repaid to the last penny. Both men shook hands on forgiveness and the promise. The foreman kept his job, and was grateful for this second chance given to him.

And all worked well from then on!

Since before moving to Sydney, I worked for a Jewish couple in Melbourne in the apparel shop, I heard similar rules of cooperation between people of their creed.

My young and talented boss was Karen. It was the same person who had left her family jewelry on the train while traveling to Rome on her way to Australia. Every new season suppliers of big stores like Macy's were requested to produce 8-10 new samples of women's apparel for the coming season. Materials were supplied free of charge. The owner of the department store was also of Jewish creed.

Working as a seamstress for Karen, I learned first-hand if and when those samples were rejected or accepted. Mostly they were rejected with the recommendation where to alter, improve or redo the original samples.

At the end of the season the boss talked to Karen, "Because you are of Jewish creed, I take patience to tell you what I do not like about your samples. I even take time to tell you what to improve. If you do it my way, and bring those altered samples back till they look right, modern, and acceptable to me you get the order. Otherwise I would have thrown you out with all your samples the first time you showed up! But I decided to give you a chance, as our Rabbi preaches to us—for our members of our synagogue!"

I think it works well for their people. Other people and other groups of other churches should also be so considerate, forgiving and offering second chances to their own people!

About a year and a half later after we took the Foveaux Street shop over Mr. Jack Cross stopped in our shop. He looked happy and beamed with contentment.

He said that when we were hosting him after taking the shop over he enjoyed very much the European dishes Georgina was serving him. When he split with Evelin he was looking for such a "dish." He bought himself a



fruit and vegetable shop. And he found his “dish” in a young lady from Austria. And she cooks for him such delicious dishes! He is very happy and content like never before!

We were happy for him.

### **At the Time of Expectation**

Our up-hill Foveaux Street was heading into the wide Crown Street, where a Women’s large hospital was built. Many children were born there for many years. Many expecting women were ascending it for their first or other offspring. Our street was a direct connection from the Central Railroad station, the streetcar and shops at down-town Sydney to the Crown Street Women’s hospital. On the way women happily stopped in our shop for some refreshment. Daily, I saw expectant mothers with their rounded tummies and some already with charming little ones, who marched with their mothers. Many of those future mothers gladly shared their age. They were mostly nineteen, twenty—some even over twenty. My age was twenty-eight, heading to twenty-nine and I felt sinfully ripe for our first child. I started to remind Edmund that the time was ripe for us to become parents. We at least had our own household and space for a child, which was most important. Neither one of us could picture how we could find time to care for a new member in our family with our busy schedule, 15 hours of work daily. Nevertheless, we decided that the time was right.

And therefore, in the fall of 1953, I found out that I was expecting. The hectic tempo of work in the shop did not diminish, on the contrary, as we were improving the looks and foundation of the building we were gaining more customers, and with it our workload grew. Expectating our first offspring was a happy and exciting time for us!

Our customers became our friends—and we felt, for the first time since we left Prague, that we had a home, a new home. For many months I did not “show” that I was expecting a child. But the time arrived to buy outfits called maternity clothes. For lack of female relatives, I asked Mrs. Sutton, a customer, to advise me and to come with me for shopping. Mrs. Sutton had three charming little girls, therefore she was already well informed in that matter.

After our return, her four-year-old Lynette wanted to know where we had been. “We went to the Women’s Crown Street hospital to order a baby for Georgina and Edmund!” replied Mrs. Sutter. “Will they have a baby in the hospital for them who speaks their language?” inquired little Lynette.

"Little babies don't speak right after birth," explained Mrs. Sutton. "Newly-born babies can only scream or cry. The parents have to teach them to talk."

"But I could speak right away" insisted Lynette.

Any objections or explanations did not convince Lynette to the contrary.

### **Little Vera**

With the ceaseless activity in the shop the months of our "expectation" were passing very fast. My doctor predicted the arrival of our child at the end of March (1954). At the beginning of March, however probably due to the constant activity in the shop and perhaps also Sydney heat, I started to feel very heavy and uneasy. The beginning of the year is Australia's summer. To prepare Edmund for the possibility of an earlier birth of our child one morning I said to him, "I feel badly today, as if I am all broken up!" and my husband replied, "You also? I too feel badly today!" So I stayed silent. When we closed the shop at 10 P.M. March 6, my pains grew stronger and kept coming regularly in the same intervals.

So we called Dr. Lyons, my gynecology doctor. On his advice we took our little luggage and walked up Foveax Street into the Women's Crown Street Hospital, not too far from us. Edmund's legs felt infirm, near collapsing, so we supported each other at times up that big hill very slowly.

The hospital staff accepted me right away. In those times it was not the custom to let husbands or anybody else be present at the birth of a child. I had a reservation in that hospital for a private room, but it was set for the very end of March, like March 26-30. I was not to be available before those dates.

I fell asleep on the labor table out of tiredness and exhaustion from the last hot days. I slept till the following evening when labor really started. As the birth of our child occurred 18 days before the predicted day, she was a very little girl. The reserved room (for one or two mothers) was not yet available.

That is why I was put into a huge general hall with about one-hundred patients and as many newly born babies. The very large space was divided by white sheet curtains making each bed into little private spaces. The noise in that area was ever present. My baby girl was not even brought to me nor shown to me for the first five days. Since she was born prematurely, weighing only five pounds, eight ounces, she was placed in the incubator for premature babies. Her birth was recorded as of March 8, 1954 at two A. M.

For us, the date March 7 was always connected with the birthday of our first beloved president Masaryk (of Czechoslovakia Republic). Australian clocks were several hours ahead of Europe.

I was not permitted to leave my bed for eight days, due to my difficult birth, they said. I strongly suspected that in other countries the mothers of a newly-born are not only permitted but encouraged to walk earlier after giving birth.

I was ordered to breast feed my baby, but because my baby was not permitted to leave her incubator, the young nurses brought a gadget that would pump my milk into a container. It was a little balloon with an applicator, but very drastic. My breasts were bleeding, and painful. I even feared such times. I laid there lonely and felt like a single mother, which society condemned. Crown Street Women's Hospital had a strange rule. They washed all their newly-born babies from midnight till morning hours. The newly born were all placed in the same hall, as were the mothers.

Washing at such unusual hours woke up the babies from their sleep and naturally they cried. Such disturbance in the middle of sleep would even make grownups cry! Each child cried, yelled and lamented in a different tone and style and the lamentations of three or four victims simultaneously filled the hall with biblical cries and sorrow. Unbelievable deep crying voices of the newly-born babies mixed with whistle-like screams and did not stop for many nocturnal hours. Since new victims were woken up unexpectedly in the middle of deep sleep, new yells, new complaining voices were tearing through the darkness all night.

It reminded me of recent years of the Second World War (it was 9 years full of fear since the end of the war). It reminded me of the pain of wartime horrors, of air attacks on helpless citizens and the calls of the wounded for help, the injustice and violence of this world. I cried those hours, when I could not sleep, over the inhumanity of sinful souls, and the misery which people cause to one another.

My brain was saying in vain, that washing would not hurt the babies, it would actually be beneficial and they will sleep later, that newly-borns only have time for eating and then 20-22 hours of sleep each day.

The babies' crying stopped around 6 a.m., only then was it possible for new mothers to fall into deep sleep. Suddenly all women in the main hall were woken up by sharp lights hitting into our eyes at about 6:30 a.m. We were given a morning cup of tea and ordered to drink it. I would have gladly given up morning teas for deserved sleep, but the lights were merciless. After such a sudden wake-up call came time for changing clothes, washing up, cleaning teeth, brushing hair and then even breakfast time.

After this entire systematic disturbance, I gave up any hope of sleep and reached for a book, suddenly all strong lights were switched off and I was left in semi-darkness. It was not possible to read. So I later asked the overworked nurse why at 9:30 a.m. all lights were switched off? "Because outside there is already enough light, and our hospital has to save resources!" But the only windows were at the other end of that hall and the daylight did not reach our side!

Next day I found that I urgently needed a laxative. But a young nurse told me that I had to first wait three days in order to prove to the doctors that I needed it! That was a horribly long time! Telephones were not available to the sickbeds. I could only ask Edmund to bring it from our home. I decided to use self-help. I secretly crawled from my bed and looked down onto the street where the children of our customers were just returning home from school. When I saw a bunch of children of our customers, I called them and threw down onto the street a little note with a request from Edmund to bring the laxative from our home. Children happily called back that they would deliver it to Edmund, and they really did.

A little later I learned how Edmund was doing in our shop at the time I was in the hospital.

Edmund, somehow in a psychic way, shared the time of the birth of our first daughter. He felt completely uprooted from normal daily life. The third day after my departure Mrs. Sutton came into the shop and said: "I am watching you Edmund, you did not eat for three days. You look like a ghost! You also do not have time to cook for yourself, since you are constantly attending customers. I brought you your lunch. I will attend the customers while you eat! I know how, since from time to time I was helping Mr. Kross in the shop when it was needed!" Edmund, after lunch, when he received my note; brought me the remedy. Edmund saw our little daughter before I did. He visited the section with premature babies and there he saw our little baby girl through a glass window. I envied him.

How was it possible that I, the mother who carried the baby in my body for nine months and in pain brought her into the world, had not yet seen my child! Edmund assured me that our little daughter had a beautiful face, like a doll. Together we selected her name. We had only the name Peter! For a little girl, the names which came into consideration were Blanche, Vera, Helen, Daniella, Marta, Margarita, Alena, Lydie, Rosalie, all names known in the Anglo-Saxon world are also familiar in the Czech world.

At the end, we decided on Vera (Veruska), Georgina (after me) and Milda (after Edmund's mother). As in the Anglosachsen world it is a custom to give the child more than one name.

Only on the fifth day, when little Vera had gained three more ounces, did the nurses bring me my beautiful child for breast-feeding. For me, it was liberation from the painful procedure. My little Vera was gentle like a hummingbird. My painful breast healed fast and little Vera gained two ounces daily.

On the bed next to me laid an apathetic woman of larger dimensions. I asked her why she was so silent. "I just passed the age of forty. This was my last chance to give birth to a child. It was stillborn, without any sign of life. It was a difficult birth! So I am trying to accept the situation health-wise as well as psychologically. We joined in marriage, my husband and I, four years ago. We were single for so long. We both wanted to have a child. It has been a year of sacrifices and health problems and now such disappointment!" My neighbor shared her sad situation. "It is for me extra difficult, when around me are so many newly born children and seeing so many happy newly mothers at the time of breast feeding. And some of them even do not care for their baby!" She concluded her story and again became sadly silent.

On my other side of me lied a young girl who was about nineteen years old. Only her mother came to visit her. She confided in me, that she lost her boyfriend when she told him that she was pregnant. He did not even call anymore. She decided to give birth to the child. She had not yet decided if she should give up the child for adoption or not. The wound and the disappointment in the man who was the father of the child was still fresh...

On the third or fourth day my Doctor Lyons came to my bed. He looked me over and said that my stitches were healing well, but that I still could not leave the bed till the eighth day. I told him, "Doctor, I ordered a son from you, but you delivered me a daughter!" He replied, "Bad doctor! Next time you have to change the doctor!" I can reveal that I did change the doctor next time, but it did not help!

When the young nurse brought little Vera to me to breast feed, she said, "I will snatch your baby for myself one day!" "What would you do with her?" I wondered surprised. "I would take her home and treat her like my doll. I would play with her because she is so lovely! She is the prettiest of all our babies!" And she was right. Little Vera had the loveliest face from the very beginning. She was petite, like a doll. Edmund and I were eagerly anticipating the moment we could take her home with us.

The whole stay at Women's Crown Hospital did not cost much, perhaps only some 16 Australian pounds. The stay was not a honey. I had little high opinion about hospital services and to this day my appreciation is even lower. Mainly the washing of newly-born babies between midnight and morning in the same hall, where all the recuperating mothers were sleeping was the miserable situation. Also, to forbid me to leave my bed for eight days after the birth of baby was revolting. Of course that was my doctor's idea! Today doctors recommend mothers to start walking the next day. The human body was created for movement and the sooner it adjust to its task, the better it is.

The main gain for our family and for our lives was that we brought our lovely daughter Vera home.

On the eighth day Dr. Lyons permitted me to get out of my bed and go home. Edmund came for us himself. It was Sunday and the time when our little shop was closed for several hours. We walked home since it was only two blocks away.

I remember that elevated feeling during the sunny march at noon. It was the feeling as if I carried in my arms a precious treasure. Our beautiful little firstborn daughter with the face of a little princess. I was nearly afraid to breathe that the fragile little beauty would be disturbed.

### **In Parenting and Grocers Role Together**

We thought that our life and work would run the same as before the birth of our baby daughter but it did not.

Edmund promised that I would be able to rest at home at least one week, as the doctor ordered me to do. But right away, the next day at noon, the shop was overflowing with customers and Edmund called to me in a desperate voice, "For goodness sake, Georgina, come at least for a minute to help me in the shop!" That one minute stretched into one hour, then a whole afternoon. The following days stretched into whole days. The entire 100 hours weekly that our shop was open meant nonstop work for both of us.

Dr. Lyons ordered me to feed our baby daughter every three hours night and day. Little Vera took one full hour to drink her milk! This meant that my sleep and rest was interrupted twice each night. Instead of seven hours, I slept for five. The breast-feeding (and milk producing) was also exhausting, therefore I was always sleepy and only half-alive in the following months.

I regret that I took the doctors' instructions literally. Little Vera often fell asleep during her feeding time. Then she would wake up hungry, but to feed her, according to my doctor, was not permitted. The next feeding time was too long a wait. The doctor prohibited me to feed her in between scheduled meal times, saying that it would upset her digestive system. Later I learned that babies receive their nourishment every time they want, with no complications. So little Vera cried and cried.

Our little Vera became the darling of all our customers. Daughters of our customers often asked us to let them hold her in their arms. She was usually cheerful and looked like a miniature baby doll.

Jeffrey Lane, the seven-year-old son of Mrs. and Mr. Lane asked his mother to ask us for our little Vera "What would you do with her?" inquired his mother. "I would play with her and I would call her Tracy!" Jeffery replied. Tracy was his beloved newspaper serial about this very famous detective, Dick Tracy. Mrs. Lane told him to ask us directly. But Jeffrey returned without any success. "I did not dare ask Edmund and Georgina because the name Tracy seemed to me very rude!" Jeffrey confessed to his mother.

That is why our little Vera kept her name to this day!

The baptism of Vera was set at St. Mary Cathedral in the center of Sydney. To be the Godmother, we asked Mrs. Kristina Filipek of Slovakian origin. She desired a child very much but since she and her husband, John, were married late, both near forty, she thought it was too late for a child.

For the Godfather, we asked our dear friend Zdenek Lenfeld, a Czech from Nachod, who flew here from Melbourne. We all planned to later immigrate to California, USA. We invited about 20 countrymen to the baptism celebration held in a restaurant in the center of Sydney.

I remember how during the return from this celebration, which lasted longer then planned, my milk started to run and soak into my dress. My dress was ruined, but the celebration was a success!

### **Good-bye to Our First Home**

We then decided to sell our Foveaux Street shop and take about a one-month vacation, then to buy a similar shop with living quarters, but smaller, where there would be less daily work. Our countrymen, Joe and Jarmila Hartman, bought our shop. That's why the sale was fast. We left the furniture behind. They were also purchasing the shop with a bigger turnover, having the interior of the building repaired. The house was painted

inside and outside and the rent was still very low. So the Hartmans got good deal.

From September '51 to September '54 our house, with the shop, was a real home to us and our customers became our friends.

After one week of tutoring the Hartman couple into the grocery role, there came a Sunday when the experts in grocery prices sent us out of the shop and the building.

We loaded all our earthly possessions and our little Vera, with her furniture, into a taxi. We really felt that it was our first home in our emigrant pilgrimage.

Our customers filled the sides of Foveaux Street and waved their scarves for good-bye. They wished us happiness and success and called, "We will never forget you!" "We miss you!" "We are so sorry you are leaving us!" We did not expect such a big outpouring of emotions! Our daily customers were drying tears from their eyes and we were also moved to tears!

For about one month we lived in the Linharts home, our friends in Marickville, in a suburb of Sydney. But for a vacation in the real meaning of the word, it was not for me. For there was constantly a lot of work for me, and living in one room was not easy for us.

One episode of our stay in Marickville I want to capture. In the room next to us lived the Reynov's couple. The husband was a hard-working Polish immigrant who was about forty years old. His wife was a pretty blond German woman about twenty-five years old Lucie. She did not work. Her husband literally adored her.

During that time my mother sent me a book in Czech language called: The Erotic Affairs of Count Don Juan. One evening in Marickville, I said that I didn't have time to read about the erotic affairs of Don Juan. To our surprise Mrs. Lucie showed great interest in this book, and showed even greater interest when I gave it to her. She said the Czech language is very close to Polish language and she wanted to learn Polish. We think Polish is very different from Czech spelling, but we did not want to argue about it!

A couple of days later Mrs. Lucie stopped Edmund in the hallway to ask him to loan her ten Australian pounds for a taxi, which already waited in front of the house. She said that her husband would return the loan to Edmund when he came home from work. She needed to go right away.

Her husband did return the amount, but he also wanted to know where his wife was going. She left with all her clothes, and all valuable items, and souvenirs from their household. When she did not return even three days later her depressed husband knew that she left him and he heard with a

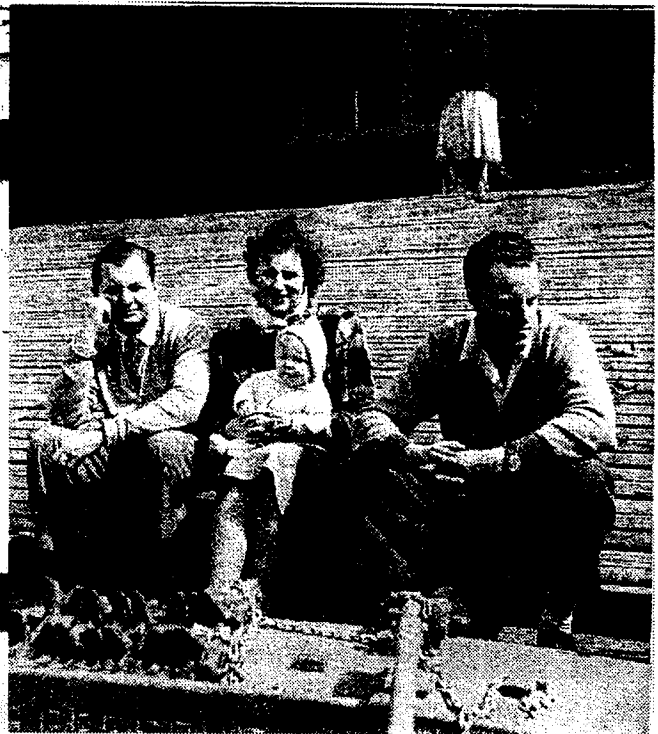




The baptism of little Vera in St. Mary's Cathedral in the center of Sydney, N.S.W Australia on April 17, 1954. The Godmother was Kristi Filipek, the Godfather was Zdenek Lenfeld. Present were also Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hartman, who bought our Foveaux Shop. Mr. Joe Filipek and a friend from Prague Mr. Pohl with his 3-year old son beside Georgina and Edmund, the parents and the priest Pater Mika.



Georgina and Edmund Teyrovsky  
The time of Vera's baptism in April 1954. We took the day off to show Zdenek Lenfeld, the Godfather of our little Vera, City of Sydney.



On outing with Bendl in Bobbin Head in his car. Little Vera was 4 months old in July 1954.



Czech immigrant. They both disappeared in Queensland, in the opposite part of Australia.

All of us in the house felt sorry for the abandoned and betrayed husband. He came to the conclusion that she married him only to emigrate from Germany, ruined and destroyed by war, to Australia. For us it was clear why Mrs. Lucie wanted to read the book about the erotic affairs of Count Don Juan in Czech language!

We stayed in Marrickville about one month and then we bought a grocery shop in another suburb in Sydney, on 37 Bedford Street in Newtown.

### **Our Shop in Newtown**

Our shop in Newtown was bigger, but the living quarters at the back were smaller than in Foveaux Street, but all on one level. We knew that the turnover would be smaller but imagined that it would also be less work for us. But the reality was different. The work was just as great, but the turnover was smaller. Only then we realized that right next to the shop there ran a railway which separated the shop from half of our potential customers. We felt lonely there, and we missed our previous customers from Foveaux Street, who had become our friends. I remembered one such day, when in our empty shop I was looking at our baby Vera, and with apprehension I realized that we were trapped in a badly going and badly located business. In my mind I said "Poor little Vera! In what a horrible ditch we dragged our little kid. There is no future for her, nor for us.

On top of it, Edmund could not accept the fact that my working ability, with full care for our newborn baby, was diminished. I breast-fed Vera in those months every three hours night and day, took care of the household and I cooked, but the work in the shop was still great. A bigger shop needed more merchandise displayed, and the customers appeared in both expected and unexpected moments. One noon, when I had cooked lunch and breast-fed our baby, I told Edmund that I would not be able for the next hour to take care of customers. But when the next customer rang the bell, Edmund yelled from the roof, "I will not descend for anything or anybody in the world!" And Vera was in the middle of her feeding!

I had to decide at that moment if I would give priority to the needs of my child, start the divorce process, and send our shop, our living and our future to hell? Or will I endure?

And so I pulled the breast out of the child's mouth and went to the shop.

I decided instead to count how many times I had to interrupt the feedings. In the interest of maintaining the marriage and livelihood I took care of the customer. By noon it was about 17 times that I interrupted the feeding of my child before Edmund crawled down from the roof.

That same evening we had a long debate—and we came to a conclusion: To sell the shop with low turnover and to buy a shop with a good turnover, and good earnings. We would then seek help for the care of little Vera and find a responsible nanny.

We considered the Newtown shop a “lemon” buy which meant a badly bought shop. We were afraid if such a shop would be salable at all! But we called the most capable agent of grocery shops in Sydney and entrusted him with this task.

Mr. Benton said that he would sell our shop for us for the same amount we bought it, plus his charges, with the condition that we would not talk at all to the potential buyer. “Not even in the one-week of instructing him? What if he would ask us something, what then?” We asked. “You would answer simply with only one word and then you stay quiet!”

I concluded that Mr. Benton's intention was to sell that shop, probably saying to the potential buyer that Edmund and I did not speak English sufficiently. Also, not understanding Australian mentality we had failed in the shop.

During the one-week of instructions to the future owners we were persistently silenced and the sale proceeded. One month after our purchase of the Newtown shop, we passed it over to a new owner.

### **The Shop in Waterloo**

After two weeks in an apartment in Radwick we bought a corner shop in Waterloo, on 117 Wellington Street. The apartment and the shop were on one level, only the bedrooms were on the first floor. The working hours were from 8 am to 6 p.m.

To find childcare for our little Vera did not take long. Her name was Dorothy and she had a three-year-old son, who adored our daughter. In that time Vera was already drinking her milk from the bottle and Dorothy took meticulous care of our baby. The shop that we purchased was from the Hudson couple who had immigrated originally from England.

The shop was super busy from the first day of our takeover. We were also selling vegetables and fruits and were delivering orders to the homes of our customers. We were busy the whole day 'till 6 p. m. closing time, when Dorothy brought Vera to our place.

We were very happy in the new location. It was the main grocery shop in its area with a long tradition. But it was an old style kind of shop, when the shopkeeper stood behind counter, he had to find all the merchandise for the customers, slice the smoked goods (called in Australia small goods) and wrap and package them. Only vegetable and fruit customers bought from the outside display.

The citizens in the Waterloo area did not own cars and the short distance from their homes to our shop was considered a great advantage for them. That's why we were busy the whole day, without stopping. New customers were a friendly bunch, but there was no time to chat with them as had happened in Foveaux Street.

Our Vera was growing up literally in front of our eyes. She was going through the stage of crawling, which in her case she sat down on one leg and with the other leg she pushed herself around our large kitchen, which was covered with linoleum, around from all corners of the kitchen. It looked as if she sailed on a paddle boat. Each conquered distance was welcomed with joy, for Vera was a child full of joy, happiness and energy for life and curiosity for everything around her.

In order that Vera would not get into the shop during her sailing trips, we put a big bakery crate in the doorway. We saw how she pulled herself up by grabbing the crate, and then she looked at the new discovered spaces – the shop itself and in her awe and surprise about her new discovery she released a deep sigh on seeing a new world and new spaces.

## Hives

I remember from the time of our Wellington period one interesting experience. The bedrooms were in the first floors above the shop. There I was lying during one of my flus, which held me several days. As I did not feel well, I did not eat at all. Edmund only brought me tea with lemon from time to time as well as some grapefruit or oranges. They had vitamin C that should be beneficial in conquering colds and flus.

It was late that Sunday, around 10 p.m., when I saw unusual things on my body. Suddenly I saw a dozen of little pimples appear on my whole body and even on my face. Then they grew into bigger and bigger white

spots. It was unbelievable how those spots grew in size and enlarged into bigger and bigger swellings all over my body. As I had never experienced nor seen anything like it before, it filled me with fear. Edmund ran up the stairs at my calls and together we searched to find the cause. Only then I realized that in last three days I did not eat any solid food, only grapefruits or oranges and lemon tea. We came to a mutual conclusion that the cause had to be hives from acidity.

Where to go to seek a medical doctor late Sunday night? We were new in the area and did not know any doctor, nor if any would even be available on Sunday nights. Edmund decided to dig into his chemical knowledge from his high school days. He remembered that an antidote to acids is bicarbonate of soda.

So he brought me a full jug of water with dissolved bicarbonate soda in it and I diligently drank glass after glass while washing my body with the same solution. I would have tried anything at all, as I was quite upset about my condition. Right before my eyes, the unbelievable white swellings started to diminish. The spots grew smaller and smaller fast—‘til they all disappeared completely. There was not the smallest sign of hives on my body.

The whole episode happened in 15 to 20 minutes. I would never have believed before that hives could look so awful, if I had not experienced it on myself. Since then I always eat something between citrus fruits and between tea to prevent the return of hives!

## **Firemen**

One Saturday, when our Waterloo shop was full of customers, we noticed that from our kitchen floor cracks lots of smoke was pouring. We asked the customers what we should do about it, since we had no idea where it was coming from and did not see any fire anywhere and had no time to search for the cause.

One lady shouted, “What do we have the fire department for? Let them search for the cause of the smoke! All houses around here are wooden structures, densely built, so people have to be careful!” We did not hesitate, called the fire station and gave them our address. What then followed, we were not expecting!

In only several minutes, with big rattles and noise, down the narrow little streets came three huge, fire engines with long wooden ladders and



Ten month old Vera with me, Georgina, her mother, in January 1955, in front of our Waterloo shop in Sydney, Australia.



Edmund as the proud father with our daughter Vera visiting in Black Town in February 1955.





each machine spewed out about six older, over-weight firemen. They completely besieged our corner shop from all angles.

Our customers rushed to our shop right away and created a long line of customers waiting to be attended. Suddenly from out of nowhere appeared a horde of screaming youngsters who started to crawl everywhere they could.

I noticed a fat fireman, with quite a belly, (if a woman, one would be sure she would be seven months pregnant) with a stick in his hands who was hitting the fingers of the boys who were hanging themselves over the edges of the fire truck.

Next, one fat fireman stood in our kitchen window and hit with a stick every street kid who tried to crawl inside the window. In the meantime, in the shop we were selling and attending customers with all the speed we were able to achieve. But there was no trace of any fire whatsoever. Only the smoke, which was escaping from the floor, growing stronger and denser.

Another fat fireman clumsily took apart two wide wooden beams from the kitchen floor and was looking into the space under the kitchen floor. On the ground under the floor one could see a little area, for a buried dog or little child. The fireman did not show any interest in it.

Then during the upheaval in the shop a woman pushed herself to the counter through the crowd. She told us that she knew what was causing the smoke! Right away we heard: "At the very end of your block of very dense houses is a new house owner. Years back the former owners bought a new washing machine. That is why they stopped using the old boiler. It was an old-style boiler in which a real fire was made and the laundry boiled in a soapy bath for some time in the kettle. Since they did not want the draft and the noises in the chimney anymore, they closed the chimney with plaster. And now the new family decided to use the old boiler, not knowing that the old chimney was walled up, and started the fire underneath the boiler!" "What do we have to do with it?" Edmund and I wondered. "Well, when the chimney is plastered closed, where could the smoke go? It is crawling under all the floors of these little houses into your kitchen and is escaping through your kitchen crevices!" she explained. "It means that there is not any dangerous fire here nor anywhere else!" we concluded. Anyway, the smoke was strong for a long time afterwards.

A half-hour later, the firemen left with all their huge fire machines, ladders and fat firemen! And business and the waiting line of customers returned to a normal pace.

But we will never forget those fat firemen fighting the flood of local street youngsters!

## **The Visum**

In the fall of the years of '54 Dorothy told us that her three-year-old son was asking for a little sister like our Vera and on weekends he was missing her very much. Some month later Dorothy informed us, she was expecting her next offspring. In the beginning of the year '55 she stopped caring for our Vera during the weekdays, but we soon found her replacement in another neighbor. Nine months later Dorothy wrote to us that their wish was filled, and that she had twin girls to the delight of Jeffrey, who was in seventh heaven.

And then our wish, for which we waited a full seven years, was fulfilled!

One day Edmund, in the beginning of the year 1955, opened a letter and called that good news had arrived and before I could grasp what it was about he grabbed me and joyfully threw me up high! Only there the ceiling was low in that spot and therefore I hit my head, hard and very painfully.

The letter announced that the immigration Visum for the USA was granted to us at last. We had only ten weeks permitted before we could enter USA.

We, therefore, did not have a choice but to sell the shop, Wellington, which was so good, so prosperous. Also, we secured the tickets for the passage on the ship Orion from Sydney to San Francisco, California. Tickets for an airplane cost double the amount. We decided that it would be better for us to go by ship and visit the cities and see the lands where our ship would always stay for one day. The ship planned stops in Auckland, New Zealand, in Suva, Fiji, then in Honolulu, Hawaii, and Vancouver, Canada, in British Columbia before we would land in San Francisco, California in the USA.

Therefore we had some interesting parts of the world to look forward to visit and to enjoy.

We sold the prosperous shop in Waterloo without a problem, packed all our belongings and were ready to start the trip to the American continent for new adventures in our life. It was planned for the end of March, 1955. We visited a handful of friends to say good-bye.

Also, our dearest friends came to see us off on the ship: The Filipeks, Linharts and Mrs Vltavsky. Departure day was March 25, 1955.

We were asking ourselves, why are we leaving Australia?

It was the country which gave us the opportunity to leave war—shattered Europe and lose the status of homeless refugees. It gave us the opportunity to live in a peaceful democratic country and learn the English language. We were very grateful for that and will always be grateful to the Australian government. It also enabled us to settle down, create our first “home,” to have our first child, our beloved little Vera.

We will also always be grateful that Australia gave us the opportunity to save our very first capital, which gave us the freedom and opportunity to go anywhere in the whole wide world, wherever our hearts would lead us!

On the other side of the coin—we considered that from the first steps we made on Australian soil, as we stated at the beginning (in 1948), we felt that our Australian immigration was like “The excursion of Mr. Broucka into the 16<sup>th</sup> century” (Vylet pana Broucka do 16ho stoleti)

In those 50<sup>th</sup> decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Australia was really behind European ways of fashion, customs, education and even in other ways. We always felt there that we were in “exile.” Although the Australian government wanted immigrants, particularly from Europe, very much, the old Australian citizens themselves opposed the influx of the new immigrants, particularly in such great numbers.

The government realized that six-and-half million of citizens in 1944, occupying the whole Australian continent, was a dangerous situation. Ninety million Japanese people squeezed on small islands were eager to grab such a large continent as Australia. If it would not have been for the help of the USA for the defense of Australia they would have lost the continent in the Second World War (1941-1945) to Japan.

But Australian citizens themselves were first hoping that they would be the dominant class over the immigrants meant to help in manual labor shortages. The contract with immigrants was set for the duration of two years after the arrival of each immigrant. But it did not take long for Australians to see that Europeans were hard working, intelligent to highly intelligent, and with husbands and wives working, quite well educated, they saved of their money and had a very tiny percentage of alcoholics. Australia at that time had a high percentage of alcoholics. Therefore, old Australian citizens started to be afraid of competition from the new immigrants for their jobs, their shops, even for their apartments. Having this attitude, they let us know. It definitely did not help in letting us feel at home and welcomed in our new land, Australia.

Besides, Edmund and I, as most Czechs, had a great desire to see the whole world, its wonders and spectacular places. We were convinced that

from the American continent, where its most sightseeing spots are well known, they would be easier to reach. Anyhow, in our minds it was the next stepping stone in our desire to see the world!

That was the reason that we were able to collect our courage, pack up our belongings, give up the prosperous shop and good living with it and risk another step into unknown territory and situations. On top of it, with a little child in our arms.

When our ship, Orion, was leaving the banks of Australia we suddenly felt our hearts stirring and we knew that part of our hearts were left in Australia!